CIVIL CONFLICT

AND IDENTITY

IN

SUDAN

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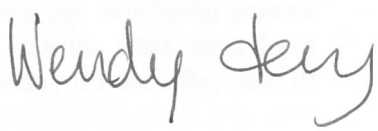
DECLARATION

This sub-thesis is my own work. To the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due acknowledgment is made in the text of this sub-thesis. Nor does it contain material that to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma of a university or institute of higher learning.

The work contained in this sub-thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.



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16 February 2005

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I landed at Khartoum Airport in April 1983, writing this sub-thesis was the last thing on my mind. I was keen to experience life in a different world, with different languages, religion and culture – in Sudan, I found all that and more.

In the years that have elapsed, my interest in Sudan and its rich cultures has deepened to the point where an academic exercise of this type is a labour of love as well as hard work.

I have been encouraged in this process by the staff of the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies – in particular, my supervisor, Dr Kirill Nourzhanov – and by the enthusiasm of the fellow students I have worked with along the way.

My thanks go to Abbas Younis Adam for suggesting the topic for this thesis. I am grateful to various members of the Sudanese communities in Australia for their frank discussions with me of the thorny topic of racism. I also thank the many Sudanese and Sudan watchers around the world whose advice, hospitality and true friendship I have been privileged to enjoy over the past twenty years.

My special thanks are due to my family and friends, in particular my wonderful parents Edna and Bob Levy, for supporting me in my endeavours, despite what must have sometimes seemed like a strange obsession with a war-torn country on the other side of the world.

ABSTRACT

Sudan has a rich but bloody history. Slavery, two civil wars, insurgencies, widespread famines and chilling human rights abuse have been woven into the very fabric of the nation's psyche.

Deep religious faith – whether Islamic, Christian or traditional beliefs – has not been able to draw the nation together, to encourage people to treat each other as equals.

Rather, racist beliefs and attitudes have become a common theme in dealings between the different ethnic groups of Sudan. While the original divide was between northerners and southerners, Muslims and everyone else, new cleavages are forming between Sudanese Africans and the ruling Sudanese Arab elite. People from the north, south, east and west are being encouraged to find a common bond as Africans.

The African Sudanese may be Muslims, Christians or followers or traditional noble beliefs. They may be from the left, the right, of no political persuasion or religious adherence.

As a group, they are taking a leaf out of the book of the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement and using its language to describe their Sudanese identities. But in the long run, calling some people Sudanese Arabs and defining them as the enemy is not an antidote to the poison of racism that has troubled Africa's largest country for so long.

This sub-thesis looks at the history of Sudan and the way in which it has been shaped by religion, by colonialism and most of all by the multiple identities of the country. It looks at Sudan before and after independence and at the wars that have cost so many lives.

It notes the missed opportunities to mould the nation into a workable whole and the way race has been used to sour relations between north and south. It looks at the resolution of the second civil war, the continuing conflict in Darfur and to the future in a new Sudan.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

For 21 years, the war in southern and central Sudan has been described in the media as a conflict between the Muslim north and the Christian and animist south.

But when separate fighting broke out in the west of the country escalated in February 2003, it was referred to as a conflict between Arab tribes and black Africans. Sometimes there is reference made to the fact that both groups are Muslims.

The conflict in the west is consistently referred to as genocide, whereas the conflict in southern and central Sudan is more usually described as a religious war. However, the conflicts in Sudan can all be linked to multiple identities and racism.

The sub-thesis looks at identity in Sudan and how it has affected the way the country has developed. In essence, it is about racism – the racism of the slave traders, the racism of the British colonialists, how race influences the way Sudanese from different parts of the country relate to each other. It looks at race and the rise of nationalism in Sudan and the obstacles to developing a cohesive national identity.

United Nations special envoy to Sudan, Jan Pronk, has described the country as "a failed nation ... many nations together in one huge territory, held together by force" (Associated Press February 14, 2005). There is a lot of truth in what he says. In Sudan, one is part of a tribal or regional group whether one likes it or not and this affects all relationships – family, politics, business, education. The dominant Arab Muslim north has been able to control resources and power in the country, to the detriment of Sudan's peaceful development as a nation.

In the past Sudan was typically divided into north and south, with the implication that the north was Muslim and the south had traditional or Christian beliefs. But further cleavages have deepened over time and a number of distinct groupings are now apparent – Arab north, Darfurians in the west, Beja in the east, Nuba in central Sudan, Nilotics

(Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk) in the south and the Equatorians in the south. Within the Nilotics, the Dinka as the largest tribe also form a separate group and within the Dinka, there are four sub-groups, with Dinka Bor the dominant group and also the home area of Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement leader John Garang. Within the Equatorians, there is also a separate group formed by the dominant Bari speakers.

The first three groups are Muslim, the Nuba are a mix of Muslims/Christians and people with traditional beliefs and the southerners are a mix of those with traditional beliefs and Christians, with some Muslims as well.

These different groups identify each other by skin colour and possibly by tribal markings, by dress and social behaviour, by area of origin and given names. While on the one hand there has been intermarriage across the board, this has generally been a case of southern women marrying northern men, rather than vice versa. Although at an individual level, people may work and study together, they are far less likely to socialise together. Northerners may look down on southerners and call them slaves, southerners may view all northerners as bigots. The influence of religion means there are varying social habits, especially regarding appropriate dress, mixing between the sexes and use of alcohol.

On a national level, north and south have been fighting since 1955. A period of peace between 1972 and 1983 provided some chance to foster working relations, but this golden era did not endure. Instead, there has been constant bloodshed, ethnic cleansing by the government in the south, central and western Sudan, abduction and slavery, scorched earth policy by the government to strengthen control over oil fields in southern Sudan, fighting between other tribal groups such as Dinka and Nuer, and human rights abuses on all sides.

With the signing of the peace deal on January 9, 2005, Sudan has the opportunity to create a new and unified country that lives in peace with itself and its neighbours. However the years of war and the lack of a cohesive, overarching identity have placed Sudan in a very negative light. In theory, Sudan is as capable of running and working

well as any other country. But it is not uncommon to hear Sudanese say, albeit in a rhetorical sense, that things were better under the British and perhaps they should come back.

But the British don't want to come back, at least not as a colonial power. Further, the aid money that has been propping up the civil war for the past 20 years is not flowing so freely any more. What is Sudan going to do to achieve a lasting peace?

In my view, there is no place for religion in politics, if people want the country to stay united. However, it is very clear that there is a strong political push to keep *sharia* as a source of national law. Continuing to take this tack is tantamount to taking out a pair of scissors and slicing the country in half. Islamic law is unacceptable to most southerners and indeed to quite a few northerners, there should be no equivocation on this issue.

Many other issues of importance, such as equal sharing of wealth, access to good jobs and political positions and proper infrastructure in regional areas have been dealt with sufficiently in the peace agreement protocols. It is up to the leaders in appropriate areas to make sure employment targets are met.

If the vexed issues of secular government and inherent racist attitudes are not addressed, why would the south want to stay? Two wars have been fought over these problems, patience is clearly running thin.

To explore these matters further, I trace the history of Sudan by looking at the way identity has affected the development of the country. I draw on twenty years of experience with Sudan and Sudanese people, including fieldwork in Sudan in 2004 and interviews with Sudanese here in Australia on my return. I have used a range of English language sources, from academic and journalistic works by Sudanese from differing ethnic backgrounds, through to academic and journalistic works by long-term and more recent Sudan watchers.

My story starts in the middle of the seventeenth century and touches on the Turko-Ottoman period, looking at colonialism, the rise of nationalism, independence and the two wars. I look at what is happening between the different groups, how they related to each other, what opportunities there were for dialogue and the responses of the various players.

I do not provide details of every political grouping and actor, I do not go deeply into the workings of the mosques or the particular sects such as the sufis. I do not give a shell-by-shell description of the war, discuss flows of armaments or the intricacies of the internal power struggles within the SPLM or the government. I do not provide a long list of every aid agency that has ever worked in Sudan, what they delivered and to whom and at what point they had their licence revoked by the government.

I do investigate the many identities of Sudan and the changing way in which they relate to each other. I do explore the ways in which these identities have shaped life in Sudan during the past 20 years of war.

Sudan is inhabited by a myriad of different ethnic groups and their daily lives have been painstakingly researched, their customs dissected, physical features photographed, homes and way of life documented, from the Nuba in central Sudan, to the Nubian people and the Baggara nomads in the north, the southern Nile-dwelling Dinka, Shilluk and Nuer, the Bari-speakers and the Uduk in the south, the Beja in the east, the Fur in the west (see Baumann 1987; Cunnison 1966; Deng 1972, 1978, 1995, 1998; Evans-Pritchard 1971, 1940; Hale 1971; Paul 1954).

For ethnographical detail, such books are invaluable, but they only set the scene for discussion of Sudanese identity and its role in the perennial political conflict.

In researching this sub-thesis, my main sources have been a different group of writers on Sudan. Only one author, Francis Deng,[1] falls into both groups. Deng writes about both the intricacies of life among his Ngok Dinka people and wider aspects of politics in southern Sudan and Sudan as a whole. Deng's books are helpful for a variety of reasons – his topics are interesting and as a well-connected Dinka, his fieldwork is invaluable. He is also able to articulate some of the problems and issues to do with identity and racism. His stories from varying tribal chiefs and so on provide a wonderful insight into the analysis of issues by people of very traditional backgrounds.

For the same reason, Abel Alier's[2] (Alier 1992) book on southern Sudan stands out. Alier describes the political history of the area from the point of view of both a commentator and a player in major Sudanese events such as the Addis Ababa Agreement. His deep understanding of the area and diligent access to historical sources provides a great deal of enlightenment on the various power plays in the country's history.

Bona Malwal's[3] (Malwal 1981, 1985, 2004) experience as a journalist and a government minister also provides insight into aspects of Sudanese identity. He is able to describe what it was like to be doing deals in the upper echelons of power and he is not afraid to put forward his opinion, even when it may differ from the views of the day.

These three authors are all from the south and also all from the Dinka tribe, albeit from different sections. Northern authors such as Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed Salih and Abdel Salaam Sidahmed (Mohamed Salih 1994, Sidahmed 1996) provide insight into aspects of the country, with Sidahmed's work on politics and Islam in Sudan particularly useful for shedding light on the machinations of the various players in that arena.

There are a number of non-Sudanese authors and commentators whose works were enlightening in my research. Lesch's (Lesch 1998) work on contested national identities

[1] Francis Deng is from the Ngok Dinka of the Abyei area of south Kordofan and is a former government minister and ambassador and United Nations special representative for displaced people.
[2] Abel Alier is a lawyer, former Sudanese Vice President and key player in negotiations for the first peace agreement in Addis Ababa in 1972.
[3] Bona Malwal is a journalist and former government minister for information and culture.

had a wealth of information. I found her work both interesting and valuable, but I would also argue she did not tackle racism as a multifaceted and entrenched phenomenon.

Other authors such as Holt and Daly, Woodward, Warburg, Voll and Voll and De Waal (Holt & Daly 1979; Woodward 1990, 2004; Warburg 1999, 2005; Voll & Voll 1985; De Waal 2001, 2004) focused on historical and/or political issues and were extremely useful in this regard and in providing further insight into the role of Islam. With close scrutiny, I was able to decipher a subtext on racism and identity.

Works by Verney, Ashworth and Lusk[4] (Verney 1995, 1999; Ashworth 2004; Lusk 2004) were invaluable in news and analysis of current events from the perspective of long-term Sudan watchers. Likewise reports from groups such as the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International had a wealth of detail and analysis.

Other Sudanese authors such as Oduho, Albino, Beshir, Wai and Abd-Al Rahim (Oduho & Deng 1963; Albino 1970; Beshir 1975; Wai 1973; Abd-Al Rahim 1986) had useful and sometimes vital information in the historical context, but were written too long ago to cover the most recent civil war.

The Sudan.Net website was and remains a wonderful source of up-to-date news from a variety of news agencies and other sources.

In my view, focusing on identity and racism as a way for looking at the conflict in Sudan may contribute to our understanding of what has been happening in that country. The very nature of religion and the need for blind belief or faith can make religious differences difficult to challenge, but racial prejudice, once identified, can surely be defeated. Where there's a will, there's a way.

The thesis is organised in five chapters.

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[4] Gillian Lusk is deputy editor of Africa Confidential newsletter in London.

Chapter One provides a brief history of Sudan, looking at the country's early organisation, including sultanates, the Mahdiya period and the role of the slave trade in fomenting fear and distrust between the north and the south.

The advent of colonialism brought new challenges to Sudan's varying ethnic groups, as the British sought to separate northerners and southerners and introduced a different religion, Christianity, and lingua franca, English, to the south.

So marked was the gap between the two regions, that northern nationalism failed to create a space for southern aspirations in their vision of a modern, independent Sudan. At the Juba Conference in 1947 the two parts of the country were stitched together and the pattern set for an Arab Muslim dominated government for the rest of the century.

Two civil wars have only served to widen the rift between the two groups, with bloodshed and broken promises exacerbated by the central government's reliance on Islam as the way forward for the nation.

Chapter Two looks at Sudan's multiple identities, discussing early nationalist movements, the move towards independence and how the Sudanisation of government positions became seen as northernisation by people from the south.

It looks at the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement and the ways the early days of peace were used to project a new multicultural image and identity for Sudan. The collapse of the agreement and the rise of the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement emphasise the inability of successive governments to provide a Sudan for all Sudanese.

Chapter Three looks at the interface between Arabs and Africans in the Sudanese context, including the growing identification of some Muslim Sudanese with their African roots. Sudan's identification as an African, Arab, Muslim and Islamic nation is reviewed,

including the role of Islamic scholar and politician Hassan Al Turabi in developing modern Sudanese Islam.

It investigates the ways in which identity makes some Sudanese more likely to suffer during war, including the role of oil and development in displacing southern Sudanese from their rural homes and Copts from their urban businesses. It looks at the widespread abuse of human rights and resurgence of slavery. It discusses how groups such as Nilotics and Equatorians are played off against each other to the advantage of the status quo.

Chapter Four looks at the crisis in Darfur, outlining the history of the area and the background to the conflict. It explains how the situation has been inflamed by government support for militia groups and details both the concern of international bodies and their inability to date to foster a solution.

Chapter Five covers the signing of the peace agreement in Naivasha, Kenya, while recognising that there is continuing bloodshed in Darfur. It looks at both the aspirations and the fears of different Sudanese groups.

The sub-thesis seeks to establish that Sudan's problems are rooted in racism, rather religion alone. It also takes the view that strong and visionary leadership is required if north and south, Arabs and Africans, Muslims, Christians and those with 'noble spiritual beliefs,'[5] are to live together successfully on a basis of friendship and equality.

[5] I understand this term was coined by former foreign minister Mansour Khalid for use in the constitution.

CHAPTER ONE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SUDAN

Introduction

Sudan is the largest country in Africa. Around 35 million people live within its 2.5 square million kilometres of desert, savannah and forest. They speak more than 100 languages, including Arabic, English and Dinka. They follow Islam, Christianity and noble spiritual beliefs.

The cultural richness and variety inside the country are echoed in its diverse range of neighbours. Sudan shares borders with Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Congo, Central African Republic, Chad and Libya. It belongs to both the African Union and the Arab League. Had history treated Sudan more kindly, its size and strategic location could have made it a bridge between Arab and African and Islamic and non-Islamic nations (Voll & Voll 1985: 143). Instead, plans to become the breadbasket of the Arab world (Gurdon 1986: 21, Barnett & Abdelkarim 1988: 4-5) have been thwarted by civil conflicts, famine and poverty pre-dating independence in 1956 and stretching to the present day.

Nevertheless, the peace agreement signed in Nairobi on January 9, 2005 between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement marks the end of the second, 21-year civil war - at least in the south of the country – and provides the chance for the nation to develop anew. The peace agreement addresses long-held grievances such as Khartoum-centric distribution of resources and limited employment opportunities for people hailing from the south. However, even as ululations ring out across the south, solutions are still being sought for the bloodshed in the western area of Darfur.

Ironically, the much awaited peace deal may mean that Sudan eventually loses its title as Africa's largest country. The peace agreement provides for a referendum after six years in which southerners can vote either to stay part of Sudan or break away and form a separate country. Such a split would have implications for other African nations struggling to stay united inside colonially-drawn borders (Gingyera-Pinycwa 1973: 133, Russell & McCall 1973: 113-115).

Nationalism and identity

Years of civil war culminating in serious discussion of separation indicates some real problems in Africa's largest nation. To have reached this situation, should Sudan be viewed as a nation at all, or simply a conglomeration of competing groups with different customs and ambitions that has proved notoriously difficult to govern?

Explaining why some groups gel as nations and others do not is not easy, argues Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm 1994: 5). He says nationalism can spring from ethnicity or from a political framework, but criteria for nationhood may be based on "single factors such as language or ethnicity or a combination of criteria such as language, common territory, common history, cultural traits" (Hobsbawm 1994: 5).

The answer to the question: "Who you think you are?" can depend on where you are at the time and who you are with.

> It is perfectly possible for a person living in Slough to think of himself, depending on circumstances, as, say, a British citizen, or (faced with citizens of a different colour) as an Indian, or (faced with other Indians) as a Gujarati, or (faced with Hindus or Muslims) as a Jain, or a member of a particular caste, or kinship connection, or as one who, at home, speaks Hindi rather than Gujarati, or doubtless in other ways (Hobsbawm 1994: 8).

Likewise, Sudanese may have multiple identities, describing themselves as, say, a southerner, a Bari-speaker, a Kuku or a Christian, depending on the context. The nature of these identities affects every aspect of their lives in Sudan, especially access to education and employment.

Many Sudanese claim a variety of ancestries: "Individuals can share characteristics with more than one group. Fur and Beja see themselves both as African culturally and as devout Muslims. Similarly, southerners can use Arabic for commerce without altering their self-identity" (Lesch 1998: 210).

Nevertheless, in Sudan, skin colour and facial features are telltale signs not only of background, but also of supposed political allegiances. Even visitors to Sudan soon learn to distinguish between northerners and southerners, to identify people by their complexion and by tribal markings. Mixed with their first words of Arabic, visitors are inevitably taught the word *abid* – literally meaning slave, but also used as a derogatory term for southerners. They discover all Sudanese are not equal, that racism is imbibed along with the waters of the Nile.

There is a clear pecking order among the Sudanese, with some believing they are more genuinely Sudanese than others. These 'lesser' Sudanese may be darker in skin colour, hail from the south, central or western Sudan, or have Nigerian or Egyptian ancestry. Religion is also a dividing line and the lighter-skinned Copts or Orthodox Christians are often described as Egyptian or Greek, no matter how long their families have lived in the country. If the Copts and other Christians are seen as outsiders by the Muslim majority, those seen as least Sudanese of all are those southerners, westerners and Nuba people practising traditional (and therefore inherently Sudanese) beliefs.

But the genetic line is blurred, argues Gray, noting there are semi-pagan northerners as well as southern Muslims, poor tribes in the north as well as relatively affluent southern families (Gray 1963: 1).

> In the north, the immigrant Arab strain has widely intermixed with the indigenous African. Often it is not colour or facial features which distinguish a northerner from a southerner, but speech, mannerisms and upbringing ... The educated elite of both groups have far more in common with each other than with their illiterate fellows; there are Marxists, democrats and totalitarians on both sides. Yet despite these cultural affinities which cross the line, a northerner, however poor or well-educated, identifies himself with the north, while a southerner, even if a Muslim or a graduate of Khartoum, remains committed to his group (Gray 1963: 1).

Lesch also maintains that the perception of a dominant Arab Islamic culture belies the reality of heterogeneity: "At independence, barely 40 per cent of the country claimed Arab descent and a slim majority of 51 per cent spoke Arabic as their indigenous language" (Lesch 1998: 33).

Lesch draws from an oft-quoted 1956 survey:

TABLE 1

SUDAN: ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION (1956)*

		Percentage of total population
Arabs		39
Those of African stock:	Southerners	30
	Westerners	13
	Nubians	3
	Beja	6
	Nuba	6
Others		3

Africans of Negroid stock are southerners, westerners and Nuba, who make up 49 per cent of the population. By westerners is meant West African peoples, mostly Nigerians, who on their way back and forth to Mecca have settled or become domiciled in the Sudan (Oduho & Deng 1963: 8).

* Published in *Khartoum Morning News* in 1958 (Oduho & Deng 1963: 8)

Mediaeval Muslim geographers named the area south of the Sahara Desert *Bilad Al Sudan*, Arabic for Land of the Blacks (Holt & Daly 1979: 1). But Lesch argues Sudan is seen as marginal in the Arab and Muslim worlds:

> Arabs tend to view northern Sudanese as African, due to their skin colour and cultural patterns, and have even used the humiliating term *abid* to describe them. Similarly, Sudanese are marginal to the Muslim world, lying on the frontiers of Africa and generally adhering to syncretic religious practices that diverge from strict orthodoxy (Lesch 1998: 212-3).

Sultans and slaves

For many, life remained little changed for centuries. However, independent sultanates were established in Sennar on the Blue Nile and Darfur in the west from the seventeenth century and the rulers of these increasingly Islamic states adopted an Arab identity. "Being a Muslim – and in Sennar and the north, being both a Muslim and an Arab – became virtually synonymous with the privilege of full membership of the state and a defence against exploitation" (Verney 1995: 11). Slave raiding was well-established as an activity of the state, religion and ethnic origin were key indicators of social status (Verney 1995: 11).

The slave trade prospered further during the Turko-Egyptian period from around 1821 to 1883. The viceroy of Egypt, Mohamed Ali, had considerable military and economic resources to assist him in expanding his empire, he sought "not merely to acquire territory in the traditional Ottoman fashion, but to exploit its resources of men and natural products" (Holt & Daly 1979: 47). A 4000-strong force left Cairo in July 1820, marching down the Nile to Sennar and conquering all along the way, however, a second party sent to Kordofan and Darfur the following year was less successful (Holt & Daly 1979: 49-53).

Nevertheless, the slave route had been expanded and in 1822 alone, around 30,000 slaves were taken from the White Nile area (Gurdon 1986: 6). Northern Arab Sudanese acted as middlemen, procuring slaves for Egypt and the Arabian peninsula and moving further into southern Sudan (Gurdon 1986: 6). For many indigenous Africans, this was their first contact with Arabs and future relations were tainted by the experience (Gurdon 1986: 6).

The Mahdiya

By 1881, a new force was developing in the north under the leadership of Mohamed Ahmed, son of a Dongala boat builder. He had declared himself to be the long-awaited

Al Mahdi or messiah and had won a number of stunning victories over the Egyptian administrators (Holt & Daly 1979: 14-16). He was supported by merchants and slave traders hard hit by taxes and intervention by officials such as Britain's General Charles Gordon, who sought to stamp out the slave trade.

By 1885, the Mahdi and his Ansar followers had captured Khartoum after a long siege, slaying Gordon to the dismay of Britain's Queen Victoria. Later that year, the Mahdi died and an expedition by his successor the Khalifa failed to conquer the southern region of Equatoria. In 1898, the Ansar were finally routed by the British. This spelt the end of the Mahdiya, but the Mahdi's legend has lived on, especially among northern Sudanese who claim him as the father of independence or renewer of the Muslim faith (Holt & Daly 1979: 87). Nevertheless, describing him as a "nationalist leader who united the tribes of the Sudan by an Islamic ideology, drove out the alien rulers and laid the foundations of a nation-state" interprets the consequences of his revolt, rather than his motives, argue Holt and Daly (Holt & Daly 1979: 87) The Mahdi's Ansar formed the base for what later became the Umma Party, a major northern political party. His great-grandson, Sadiq Al Mahdi, has twice been Prime Minister of Sudan and has been head of the Umma Party for 40 years.

Anglo-Egyptian Condominium

When the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium was formed in 1898, the country was a disparate group of tribal, regional and religious alliances that did not think of itself as a north and a south, let alone a country. Many tribes had only vague knowledge of people other than their own neighbours, contact between north and south had often been poisoned by Turko-Ottoman and even Mahdist slave raids (Deng 1995: 76).

All over Africa, there was a scramble for power by colonial governments, with Britain, France and Belgium showing an interest in the Nile Valley and Britain winning out with the aim of protecting Egypt further north (Abd Al-Rahim 1969: 24). Borders were drawn arbitrarily, based on administrative boundaries rather than existing tribal patterns and

cultural and linguistic realities. As a result, groups such as the Luo found themselves living in both Sudan and Kenya, while the Madi and Acholi were divided by the border between Uganda and Sudan.

As the British strengthened their administration, cleavages between the north and south were further widened through their southern policy whereby closed district and education policies effectively limited contact between the two groups. Northern traders (*jellaba*) were forbidden to enter the south, while Greek and Syrian traders and foreign Christian missionaries were welcomed (Deng 1995: 81). The condominium was slow to start schools in the south, relying on missionaries to provide classes in local languages for juniors, moving to English for seniors. In the north, students were taught in Arabic, with advanced classes in English.

Development of the south was stunted, while the north was able to move ahead. However the colonial presence did deter slave traders. Deng argues that whatever is said against British rule in Sudan, "it brought the longest period of peace and security, at least from invasion and the use of crude force, that has been experienced in the south throughout recorded history" (Deng 1972: 152).

Meanwhile, centrally-located tribes such as the Nuba and Ingessana - neither southern nor Arab – had little chance for "development, education and exposure to the outside world" (Verney 1991: 9). The spread of Christianity in the Nuba Mountains contributed to persecution and denial of political rights under successive Sudanese governments (Verney 1991: 32).

Juba Conference

In 1947, northern and southern leaders were brought together by the British to discuss the 'Southern Problem' at the Juba Conference. Past plans to join the non-Islamic southern Sudan to Kenya or Uganda were scotched and calls by southern chiefs for a step-by-step approach to unity ignored (Alier 1991: 20). Instead, the south was more or less

railroaded into forming one country with the north (Alier 1991: 20). Albino notes that the British civil secretary's opening speech made no secret of the expected outcome, indicating that for reasons of history, geography, river transport and so on, the area must turn to the north (Albino 1970: 25).

Following the decision, the borders between the two regions were thrown open, religious freedom was allowed, Muslim preachers could enter the south and government wages were equalised for northerners and southerners doing the same work (Alier 1991: 21). "A Legislative Assembly was set up consisting of 93 members of whom 65 were elected, 10 were nominated by the Governor-General and 18 others were ex-officio ... Thirteen of the 93 represented the southern Sudan" (Alier 1991: 21).

The 1950s also saw the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, later to evolve into the Islamic Charter Front (1960s) and National Islamic Front (1980s), with Hassan Al Turabi at the helm. Modern Islamism brought with it a vision of an Islamic state: "The debate itself was triggered in the first place by the Islamists' campaigns for the enforcement of an Islamic constitution and Islamic legislation" (Sidahmed 1996: 7)

Independence

Sudan became independent on January 1, 1956, with the Legislative Assembly grabbing power in a gap between appointments of governors-general. But perceived discrimination by northern leaders towards the south had already resulted in a mutiny in 1955 by southern forces in Torit. The country began its independent history with a civil war underway, setting the pattern for years of repression and attempts to deal with the core problems of racism and centralised power through the barrel of a gun.

By 1958, Prime Minister Ismail Al Azhari's inaugural government had been ousted by General Ibrahim Abboud, whose hardline approach to the south entrenched opposition. Voll argues that Abboud relied on firepower, not negotiation and leading southern politicians "fled into exile or went into the back country in the south. As the

government's repression became more violent, the southern response increased its militancy" (Voll & Voll 1985: 75).

Nimeiri's May Revolution

By May 1969, Sudan was ripe for change and a group of officers led by Colonel Gaafar Mohamed Nimeiri took power with communist and leftist support. Three years later, Nimeiri was lauded for the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement, which sealed a peace deal between Khartoum and the southern rebel forces known as Anyanya. The 18-year civil war was over and regional autonomy had been won for the south.

But the glowing promises of President Nimeiri and his team did not endure. After 11 years, the south disintegrated into civil war yet again, after Nimeiri moved in 1983 to further abrogate the Addis Ababa Agreement. When he tried to transfer a garrison of southern troops from Bor in Upper Nile to northern Sudan, the troops mutinied and disappeared into the bush. With them went former Anyanya officer Colonel Dr John Garang de Mabior, soon to lead the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

By September 1983, Nimeiri had introduced a version of *sharia* or Islamic law, winning support from Hassan Al Turabi's National Islamic Front. But severe famine in rural areas, economic constraints, food and petrol shortages in the capital and repressive policies brought the downfall of Nimeiri in a military coup in 1985, followed by partial elections in 1986 and yet another military coup in 1989.

Bashir and the Islamists

It was now the turn of Omar Hassan Al Bashir and his hardline National Salvation Islamic government to try running Africa's largest nation. Lesch says both military and politicians maintained that:

> Islam and Arabic were the essential bases for the country's nationalism and should define its legal, political and economic systems. Arabic should supercede indigenous languages as well as English, the coloniser's language. Minorities must either merge into that Islamic culture or be exempt from a few religious punishments. Christians could practice their faith, but adherents of traditional African faiths could be compelled to convert, since they were not monotheist people of the book (Lesch 1998: 113).

Sixteen years later, attempts to redraw the country as an Arab-Muslim nation have not succeeded, at least not as intended. Nor has Bashir been able to defeat John Garang, although both sides have paid heavily with at least a million lives lost and many more injured and displaced.

A New Sudan?

Deng notes that in the interim, many southerners have become fluent in Arabic and there may be more southern Muslims (Deng 1995: 28). Yet he argues that sentiments dividing the north and south along racial, ethnic and nationalistic lines "appear to have intensified, despite the vision of a new, unified Sudan postulated by the SPLM" (Deng 1995: 28).

The New Sudan is the SPLM's vision for a united, democratic, secular government (ICG January 2002: 46). In this utopia, what has long been seen as a southern problem would become an issue for Sudan as a whole, resolvable only with constitutional restructuring of the nation-state. In the words of Abusabib: "This perspective has shattered completely the old south-north dichotomy as the perceptual basis of the Sudanese crisis since independence. At a deeper level it has added a new dimension to the way the northern identity is being perceived" (Abusabib 2001: 91).

Identity issues are discussed on the street, with a young guard at a club in Khartoum asking: "Look at me, what do you see – am I an Arab or an African?" The reply was that he was Sudanese.[6]

[6] Remark to me in Khartoum, 2004

Sudan's early history, with slave trade followed by colonialism, set the scene for later troubles. Since independence, national governments have spent more time fighting wars than developing the country or working to ensure a cohesive Sudanese identity.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SUDANESE IDENTITY

A country divided

We have seen that Sudan is a vibrant mix of races, religions and traditions, developed as two separate entities under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. In the lead-up to independence, the north was keen to ensure the south was drawn into the Sudanese fold. Opinions differed in the north and south about British rule and whether it helped heal or widen cleavages between the two areas.

Lesch says that today's Islamists argue that British and missionary prejudice against Islam and Arabic culture made the "educated southern elite hate the north" while the north often viewed the south as the "lost brother snatched away by the aliens and long due back" (Lesch 1998: 33). She argues that Islamists believe the British aimed to create an anti-Islamic culture: "Islamist leader Hassan Al Turabi asserts that without the forced separation, southern ethnic groups would have disappeared through intermarriage and the gradual diffusion of Arabic and Islam" (Lesch 1998: 33).

But Turabi fails to recognise the clear preference of many in the south for their own customs and beliefs. Deng notes that a traditional Dinka considers his country the best in the world, whatever the deprivations and troubles (Deng 1972: 6). "For a Dinka to threaten his relatives with leaving Dinkaland was seen as little short of suicide. What a lot to give up – and for what!" (Deng 1972: 6).

While the north maintained that the British had divided the country, the south believed that the British had united it. Rather than perceiving colonial intervention as a problem, some Dinka chiefs believed the British were brought to Sudan by earlier tribal leaders to save them from the Arab slave traders (Deng 1972: 152-158). The British policy of

indirect rule through 'native administration' allowed Sudanese to fill government jobs up to a certain level of seniority and traditional leaders to exercise some powers, thus strengthening tribal chiefs and traditional institutions as well as providing a way to rule Sudan on the cheap (Deng 1972: 155).

Through native administration, Britain also hoped to avoid creeping nationalism, but Woodward argues "nationalism was an even more complex, if at that time remote, problem for the south (Woodward 1990: 47).

In the early twentieth century, the British were far more concerned about northern nationalism than possible stirrings in the south. They were worried that increasing Egyptian nationalism would be spread by soldiers serving in Sudan, but "there was little overt reaction to the Egyptian revolution" (Holt and Daly 1979: 131).

White Flag League and Graduates Congress

After World War One, a series of Sudanese political organisations with a nationalist bent began to emerge. In 1922, an ex-Sudanese army officer and son of Dinka slaves, Ali Abdal Latif, was arrested for trying to get a newspaper article published titled *The Claims of the Sudanese Nation*. Abdal Latif had been dismissed from the army following a clash with an English officer whom he found arrogant (Abd Al-Rahim 1969: 104). By 1923, he was a celebrity. With other government employees, he founded the White Flag League, "apparently with Egyptian encouragement and backing" (Holt and Daly 1979: 131). The League wanted Nile Valley unity in the form of a closer relationship with Egypt, a move which alarmed the British, as did the support from ex-army and government staff. The group also challenged established religious and tribal notables such as the Ansar (headed by the Mahdi family) and Khatmiya (Mirghani family) (Holt and Daly 1979: 133). In due course, Abdal Latif was imprisoned yet again and the revolt squashed by government forces.

The demise of the White Flag League crushed the "first modern struggle for freedom in the Sudan," argues Lesch (Lesch 1998: 30). But she notes analysts often omit Abdal Latif's Dinka heritage and his parents' slave background.

> That would imply that a southerner of slave origin could be the authentic leader of an interethnic Sudanese national movement. Moreover, analyses sometimes omit the fact that Mahdi and Mirghani – along with other religious and tribal elites – viewed Abdal Latif as a dangerous upstart (Lesch 1998:30).

It was not until the late 1930s that Sudanese began once again to organise themselves on a nationwide basis. Various clubs of high school graduates – an elite group at the time – merged to form the Graduates General Congress in 1938, aiming to serve the public interest of the country and the graduates. Abd Al-Rahim argues that the group was obliged to keep their stated goals vague. "[It] was necessary not only to guarantee the unity and solidarity of the graduates in supporting their new organisation, but also in order to ensure the approval of the government" (Abd Al-Rahim 1969: 125).

Establishing the Congress was a victory for the young and nationalistic post-1924 generation. They wanted to break away from the rigid, feudally-based Ansar and Khatmiya groups and create a non-sectarian nationalist movement in Sudan (Abd Al-Rahim 1969: 130).

The northern Sudanese nationalist movement opposed native administration and Britain's southern policy, which they felt would give the three southern provinces a different character and outlook from the rest of the country and could see them separated from Sudan and lumped with other possessions further south (Abd Al-Rahim 1973: 37). But they were divided over Sudan's independent future, with many Muslims seeing nationalism as an extension of faith and allegiance, therefore, as something that is owed to Islam rather than to a nation (Abd Al-Rahim 1973: 37-39).

Multiple identities

The issue of identity was a key issue for the nationalist movement. Mahmoud argues that early activists displayed an Arab-Islamic identification because they came from the riverain north, but on the other hand, the Muslim masses in the north were ambivalent about Arabism due to their ethnic and linguistic diversity (Mahmoud 2001: 5).

Further, politically conscious northern Sudanese may have been actively against identifying with their African roots, classing that heritage as part of the *jahiliya* – the Age of Ignorance or World of Darkness, argues Abd Al Rahim (Abd Al-Rahim 1973: 39).

For Muslim Sudanese, the Islamic community is global and demands supranational loyalty, maintain Voll and Voll: "The centre of this global community and its tradition is outside the Sudan. As a result, a significant part of the Sudanese identity is itself defined by external elements" (Voll & Voll 1985: 123).

The Arab dimension of the Sudanese identity raises similar problems. Many early nationalists considered themselves Arabs and supported Nile Valley unity:

> These Arab Sudanese political leaders also dominated politics at independence. They brought the Sudan not only into the United Nations but also into the Arab League. Within that framework, the Sudan is an Arab country, although in strict ethnic-historical terms the majority of Sudanese are not Arabs. Enthusiastic Arab nationalists often speak of the one Arab nation and work to create a sense of national identity that ignores artificial political borders. When Sudanese Arab leaders stress the Arabness of the Sudan too vigorously, they arouse the fears of many non-Arab Sudanese (Voll & Voll 1985: 123).

Voll and Voll argue there is a third, less controversial, supranational identity: African.

> Sudanese, whether or not they are Arab or Muslim, recognise that the Sudan is in Africa and that African causes have some importance for the Sudanese position in world affairs. As a result, Sudanese leaders, especially those who are trying to lessen the potential tensions aroused by an Arab or Islamic orientation to policy, have been active in African continental politics (Voll & Voll 1985: 124).

While the Graduates Congress did not eliminate major divisions in northern Sudanese politics, it was a major step towards modern party politics in the Sudan (Voll & Voll 1985: 55). By the 1940s, two mainstream political parties had appeared, the National Unionist Party and the Umma Party. Sidahmed notes that the parties were based on the influence of the major religious sects, Ansar and Khatmiya, and continue to divide the loyalties of the majority of Sudanese Muslims until today (Sidahmed 1996: xiii).

Towards independence

As World War Two drew to a close, the nationalist clamour for independence grew stronger and the Graduates Congress pushed the government to end southern isolation (Alier 1992: 18). But if the south was to be brought out of its wraps, which way would Britain push it – to Uganda and Kenya or to northern Sudan?

At first, it seemed that the British wanted a quid each way. In 1944, civil secretary Sir Douglas Newbold produced a policy statement reaffirming the government's belief that the south was African and Negroid (Alier 1992:18). Newbold wrote:

> Our obvious duty is therefore to push them ahead as far as we can with economic and educational development so that these people can be equipped to stand up for themselves in the future whether their lot be eventually cast with the northern Sudan or with East Africa, or partly with each (cited in Alier 1992:18).

But the sudden death of Newbold in March 1945 brought a replacement secretary with different ideas. Fearful of northern nationalist calls for unity with Egypt, Sir James Robertson did a backflip, stating as follows:

> The policy of the Sudan Government regarding the southern Sudan is to act upon the facts that the peoples of the southern Sudan are distinctly African and Negroid but that geography and economics combine (so far as can be seen at the present time) to render them inextricably bound for future development to the Middle Eastern and Arabicised northern Sudan (cited in Alier 1992:19).

The Juba Conference in 1947 was held in response to the concerns of British administrators in the south who were not impressed by Robertson's statement. Northern leaders and southern chiefs, junior southern officials and non-commissioned southern officers attended, along with British officials (Alier 1992: 20). Robertson argued later

that the conference was designed to determine the capabilities of southerners and had no bearing on his decision to merge north and south. He said:

> It was quite inaccurate, therefore, for some people to say later that at the Juba conference the southern representatives agreed to come in with the north ... The only decision resulting from the conference was taken by me (cited in Alier 1992: 21).

But Alier is adamant that the merger was "literally rammed down the throats of southern representatives," despite southern chiefs urging caution, saying such a union required the same attention to detail as a marriage negotiation, lest a hurried union resulted in an unhappy home and violent divorce (Alier 1992: 19-20).

The British had fostered southern tribal manners and languages and given a free hand to the foreign religion of Christianity rather than Islam, argues Toynbee (Toynbee 1970: ix). He says their abrupt abdication left a mainly Arabic-speaking and entirely Muslim north confronting a mainly pagan south led by a small missionary-educated Christian intelligentsia (Toynbee 1970: ix). "The British differentiated the northern and southern Sudanese from each other without separating them from each other politically" (Toynbee 1970: ix).

But despite misgivings, the shotgun wedding was to go ahead and there was a rush to bring southern education and economy up to northern speeds. The first government intermediate school was opened in the south that year and a secondary school two years later. By 1950, there was an agricultural and trading venture covering cotton and oil seeds in the southern province of Equatoria.

Southerners were nervous and their fears increased when northern leaders visited Egypt in 1952 and 1953 to discuss a possible merger with Cairo without including the south in their party. Next, the transitional government decreed Arabic as the only official language. Intermediate and secondary schools were to teach in Arabic, the south was to be assimilated into the northern Arabic education system, rather than children starting studies in their local tribal language followed later by English, says Lesch (Lesch 1998: 34-35).

Sudanisation brings northernisation

The Sudanisation of the civil service became another bone of contention as southerners missed out on government jobs, fuelling perceptions of discrimination. Lesch notes that of 800 senior administrative posts announced in 1954, only six went to southerners (Lesch 1998: 34-35). Even given the relative disparity in education between north and south, the numbers indicate a clear northern bias. She continues:

> No southerners became governors, deputy governors or district commissioners; northern officials ruled the south. The all-northern Sudanisation commission claimed that southerners lacked seniority, experience and academic degrees; their lack of fluency in Arabic was an important, though unstated, factor (Lesch 1998: 34-35).

By 1955, the civil war was underway. A government report investigating the uprisings in the south that year noted that for historical reasons, southerners regarded northerners as their traditional enemies (cited in Deng 1995: 26-27). The report stated that southern loyalties remained with their tribes and they had neither "a feeling of common citizenship with the northern Sudanese, nor a feeling of nationalism or patriotism to the Sudan as a whole" (cited in Deng 1995: 26-27). The report identified the principal challenges to state and nation building posed by Sudan's identity issue:

> The cleavage resulting from this fundamental crisis of nationhood has been at the root of the chronic conflict that has afflicted the country since independence, has undermined successive governments and remains the main obstacle to peace, unity and stability" (Deng 1995: 27).

At independence in 1956, there was a curious sense of anti-climax, with the new government led by Ismail Al Azhari seen as merely the colonial successor rather than its supplanter (Holt & Daly 1979: 167). The nationalists who founded the republic were deeply affected by Western culture and political ideas and sought to control the administration built up under the condominium, not to destroy it, argue Holt and Daly (Holt & Daly 1979: 167). Sidahmed says the Ansar-Khatmiya coalition promised to put aside their differences and "cooperate on what is bound to bring happiness, welfare, freedom and complete sovereignty to the Sudanese people" (Sidahmed 1996: 57).

However, government policy appeared to favour the north, argue Russell and McCall (Russell & McCall 1973: 110). Numerous agricultural projects planned for the south were thwarted by the government, including a proposed sugar factory for Mongalla that was eventually built at Khasm Al Girba in the north; a planned German papyrus paper factory for Malakal that was stymied when the government insisted it be built in the north; the flourishing Zande cotton scheme started by the British that was deserted during the civil war and the transfer of the copper-bearing area of Hofrat En Nahas from Bahr Al Ghazal to Darfur province, effectively moving the potential mines and their profits to the north (Russell & McCall 1973: 110-111). These moves by the government prevented areas of the south from being exposed to new technologies, denied people employment in their home areas and fostered a policy of using the south's resources without benefit for its citizens – a policy that was to reappear later when oil was discovered.

Albino notes that the south was told for years that its backwardness was a legacy from the imperialists (Albino 1970: 89). "The reason given for not developing the south always remains the same. It is because the south is underdeveloped" (Albino 1970: 89).

Although nowhere in Sudan could be said to be blessed with an abundance of infrastructure, the figures for schools and intakes for police and army give a further indication of disparities between the north and south. Before independence, there were 14 secondary school streams for boys in the north and just three in the south, after independence, 45 in the north and still just three in the south (Albino 1970: 100). Girls' education was an even sorrier tale – there was no government secondary school at all for girls in the south and only nine girls' secondary schools in the north, while an intermediate girls' school at Maridi in the south reopened for just a year in 1963 after being closed for eight years (Albino 1970: 100).

The Sudan Police College enrolled ten northerners and three southerners under the British in 1950, while by 1964 it took in 35 northerners and just two southerners (Albino 1970: 104). "Since independence, 153 northerners have gone through the college, as against only seven southerners – about four per cent … The highest rank held by the top five

southerners in the army in 1965 was that of major. The rest were captains and below – the majority being lieutenants" (Albino 1970: 104-105). In 1954, one southerner and 19 northerners were commissioned as officers in the army, by 1965, four southerners were commissioned compared with 67 northerners (Albino 1970: 105).

A table below detailing bank branches by province reveals a paucity of banks in regional areas, including Darfur, the Nuba area of South Kordofan and the south. It reflects both the lack of modern economic activity in the regions as well as the lack of infrastructure and is a pointer to the latter day grievances of opposition groups.

TABLE 2

SUDAN: DISTRIBUTION OF BANKS BY PROVINCE (1975 AND 1981)

	1975	**1981**
Khartoum	33	61
Kassala	12	18
Red Sea	10	13
Blue Nile	7	10
White Nile	6	10
Gezira	10	18
Northern	5	6
Nile	5	8
Northern Kordofan	8	10
Southern Kordofan	2	4
Northern Darfur	3	4
Southern Darfur	6	8
Upper Nile*	3	3
Eastern Equatoria*	1	1
Western Equatoria*	1	5
Bahr Al Ghazal*	1	2
Jonglei*	-	1
Lakes*	-	1
Total	**113**	**183**

* indicates southern province
Source: Bank of Sudan, reprinted in Sudan Yearbook (Sudanow 1983: 144).

Rural movements

While national debates took place in an urban setting, the sectarian base of the main political parties meant they were always looking to boost support in their rural strongholds (Woodward 1990: 98). In time, regional movements would appear in less developed areas of rural Sudan - Kordofan, Nuba Mountains, Darfur, Red Sea region and the south, created by rural elites rather than rural masses (Kurita 1994: 208-9). These movements were led by professionals or former officials educated in Khartoum who were often sons of tribal chiefs or local merchants. Kurita notes that they came from a rural social class with very strong ties with the outside world; in some cases, the "local leader and champion of regionalism (and often anti-Arabism) turned out to be the descendant of an Arab merchant long settled in the region" (Kurita 1994: 208-9). An exception was the General Union of the Nuba Mountains, which drew support from ordinary Nuba people in Khartoum, ex-soldiers and hospital staff (Kurita 1994: 209).

A military coup in 1958 brought General Ibrahim Abboud to power. He ramped up the war, sending many more southerners fleeing to Uganda and Kenya, where those who had the chance to continue schooling did so in English rather than Arabic. He was removed by popular uprising in 1964, but the war continued under various civilian leaders including Umma's Sadiq Al Mahdi. By the time of Colonel Gaafar Nimeiri's May Revolution in 1969, the stage was set for lengthy peace negotiations with Joseph Lagu and the rebel Anyanya forces, culminating in the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement.

The golden days of the Addis Ababa Agreement

For Sudan, the Addis Ababa Agreement brought the first real chance since independence to try to forge a new identity for the country, one that embraced all of its peoples. Deng views the early days of the accord as "a golden era in north-south relations" (Deng 1995: 384). He argues while the history of north-south relations is negative and divisive, this relatively peaceful period allowed Sudan to play its long-postulated role of Afro-Arab moderator and link between Africa and the Middle East (Deng 1995: 384). "Judging

from its subsequent demise, however, the accord certainly did not enjoy a national consensus and especially the support of the Muslim right" (Deng 1995: 384).

The catchcry of the Nimeiri government was 'unity in diversity' and over the ensuing years, various monuments to unity and the Addis Ababa Agreement sprang up around the country, such as Unity Gardens, Unity Bank and Unity High School in Khartoum. When oil was found near Bentiu in the south, the area was named Unity Field. In the south, some parents named their boys Nimeiri. A carved wooden Unity Statue in Juba Cultural Gardens depicted a northerner and a southerner joining hands – though still standing in 1986,[7] it had outlived the agreement it represented (SPLM 1986: 24).

In 1972, Nimeiri pledged to develop a new constitution reflecting:

> 1. National unity
> 2. Striving for the establishment of a socialist society based on sufficiency and social justice
> 3. Restructuring of social and economic relationships
> 4. Stability of government through institutions, laws and replacing loyalty to individuals by loyalty to the nation (cited in Khalid 1985: 49).

With more southerners in positions of power and influence, it was possible to shape a more balanced Arab-African policy both domestically and internationally. As journalist and former Minister for Information and Culture, Bona Malwal, has put it:

> National policy has always been characterised by what have largely been lip-service labels. So the question of an Afro-Arab, an Arab or an African Sudan was always something any government would pronounce without giving much attention to the content of the policy and its implementation ...The things we tried to do were erased almost instantly after we left the government. In the Ministry of Culture and Information, for instance, I had an annual cultural festival in which we would honour poets, artists, writers from both south and north, from both the African and the Arab elements ... We had gone to a stage where you found dancers from northern Sudan singing songs of the tribes in southern Sudan and dancing southern dances and vice versa ... During my time, nobody would start the news with a Quranic recitation; this is now the case (cited in Deng 1995: 382).

[7] No details available on whether it survived the war.

Mansour Khalid, foreign minister for much of the Nimeiri period, explains that there was a deliberate attempt to broaden the Sudanese image to reflect all aspects of their culture. He says:

> The post-Addis Ababa period ushered in a Sudanese renaissance reflected in many things that people take for granted today. Among the latter was the concern of the regime towards Sudanese customs and the opening of the Sudanese Museum, the Nubian archives, the care to endow a significant status to the Nubian Christian kingdom, the promotion of Sudanese folklore (cited in Deng 1995: 382).

But there was always due attention paid to the country's Arab background, for political and financial reasons as much as ideological links. Malwal explains:

> We were always mindful of our Arab identity as a way of promoting ourselves ... We always felt that if we, by which I[8] mean the people who were making decisions in this process, identified ourselves as Muslims and Arabs, more capital would flow in. So there is no denying we became hostages of our own ideological tilt and we linked it to our economic decisions and our economic behaviour (cited in Deng 1995: 379).

However, accusations of ethnic bias increased the longer Nimeiri stayed in power. Woodward notes that as well as favouring his family, Nimeiri was accused of pandering to Nubians.[9]

> Although only two to three per cent of the total Sudanese population, Nubians constituted 16 to 18 per cent of the people of Khartoum in 1955-56 and the percentage is probably higher today. Of seven heads of government since independence, four have been Nubians and many ministers and senior civil servants have been of this ethnic group. Nubians were also heavily represented in the transport parastatals, higher education, banks and big business houses and legal and religious posts (Woodward 1990: 194).

The Agreement collapses

As time elapsed, so did Nimeiri's credibility as the friend of the south and his reputation was sullied forever when he abrogated the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1983 by splitting the south into three regions. Later that year, Nimeiri introduced what became known as

[8] Malwal is a Dinka from Gogrial in Bahr Al Ghazal region and is not a Muslim.
[9] Nubians are from the north and should not be confused with the Nuba people from the hills of south Kordofan.

the 'September law,' a version of *sharia* (Islamic law) that had been developed under the guidance of veteran Islamist and National Islamic Front leader, Dr Hassan Al Turabi. The move brought controversy and further inflamed relations with the south, where war had erupted again. There was a heated debate involving media, politicians and jurists, coupled with a three-month strike by the judiciary.

Despite Turabi's deserved reputation as an Islamic thinker, he has been unable to accept that some parts of Sudan and some people in Sudan – whether northerners or southerners, Muslims, Christians or animists - do not wish to live according to his interpretation of the Quran. A pragmatist of the highest water, he maintains that the modern Islamic movement in Sudan is not sectarian, but tries to function through popular participation (Sidahmed 1996: 131). Turabi argues:

> We even want our Islamic movement to interact with the Christians. Our program is religiously comprehensive, excluding only non-religious ideologists such as Marxist and secularist creeds and those opinionated movements which claim to hold direct mandates from God[10] (cited in Sidahmed 1996: 131).

Nimeiri's next move was to proclaim himself imam of the whole Sudan, for Muslims and non-Muslims alike (Sidahmed 1996: 136). This was an extraordinary change of heart for someone who came to power with leftist support and had been praised internationally for achieving peace. Parts of the country became gripped with famine and Nimeiri's star finally began to wane. In April 1985, there was a popular uprising while he was out of the country on an official visit and he was replaced by a transitional military government. He had been successful in uniting the country after the first civil war, but failed to capitalise on the chance to develop a new national persona that included all the different peoples of Sudan.

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[10] Turabi is referring to Sudan's liberal Muslim reformists, the Republican Brothers. Their leader, Mahmoud Mohamed Taha, was executed for apostasy in January 1985, some months before Nimeiri's dismissal.

Sudan People's Liberation Movement

Meanwhile, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), was starting to develop a more inclusive rhetoric, at least on paper. Rather than fighting for secession, as did the Anyanya in the first war, the SPLM and its leader John Garang claimed the whole of Sudan as its own. Mohamed Salih explains:

> John Garang de Mabior, a former colonel in the Sudanese army and an economist with a doctorate from the University of Iowa, was never in favour of the Addis Ababa Agreement and was among the few Anyanya officers who argued for the continuation of the civil war. Garang, a Dinka, became the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the Dinka became the dominant ethnic group in the Sudan People's Liberation Army (Mohamed Salih 1994: 196).

The SPLM rejected Khartoum's policy of playing off nationalities against one another, argues Atem, writing in the SPLM magazine *Newsudan*. He maintains that Khartoum was hypocritical to claim it was the "architect and guardian of national unity at a time when it is carrying out a war of genocide against innocent and defenceless citizens with a view to decimating certain ethnic groups" (Atem 1986: 15).

The SPLM Manifesto was keen to provide a definition of the term 'north' covering all areas in northern Sudan "in which peripheral development became necessary in order to facilitate cheap extraction of surplus by the colonial regime" (SPLM 1983: 4-5). So it argued that Khartoum and Blue Nile provinces were part of the north, but all other areas in northern Sudan, including Darfur, Kordofan, Kassala and Northern Province were deemed underdeveloped areas, just like the southern provinces of Bahr Al Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile known as southern Sudan.

> What we have defined as underdeveloped areas in northern Sudan are the most deceived and neglected by the ruling minority clique regime in Khartoum. These minority clique regimes have always used the questions of nationality and religion to isolate the struggle in the south from that of the underdeveloped areas in the north (SPLM 1983: 4-5).

Gurdon argued that the SPLM was trying to create a coalition of non-Arab groups within Sudan to replace the traditional political parties which had dominated the post-

independence period (Gurdon 1986: 99). At the same time, he was adamant that the SPLM could not win an outright military victory and would find it difficult to create such a coalition (Gurdon 1986: 99).

> Because of historical patterns of racism, quite apart from other factors, only a minute fraction of the northern Muslim Sudanese would ever accept a government which was dominated by southern Sudanese non-Muslims. While the SPLA argues that they will ultimately have to accept such an idea, the position is completely unrealistic and the SPLA will never form a Sudanese government or be the majority partner in one (Gurdon 1986: 99).

To date, Gurdon's words have proved correct. However, the SPLM has won a following in the south, which Mohamed Salih says is due to three factors.

> Firstly, there were the redivision of the south into three regions and the undoing of the Addis Ababa Agreement, which established southern Sudan as one region, within the boundaries inherited from the colonial regime. While Equatorians supported redivision in fear of Dinka domination, the Dinka perceived it as an act designed by the Nimeiri regime to weaken the bargaining power of a united south. Secondly there were the redrawing of the borderline between north and south in order to put the newly discovered oil sites in southern Sudan inside the north and the decision not to build an oil refinery in the south, but to build a pipeline that would take crude oil to the north. Thirdly, there was the imposition of the Islamic Sharia laws on all sectors of the Sudanese population, Muslims, Christians and animists alike. Although Sharia was not applied in the south, southerners living in the north were among its first victims (Mohamed Salih 1994: 195-196).

Conclusion

Hutchinson says that one of nationalism's strengths is "its ability to mobilise a range of interests and social strata - from urban secular middle classes to traditionalist peasantries" (Hutchinson 1994: 74). But as the second war became entrenched in Sudan, there was little sign of the unity in diversity promoted during the early days of Nimeiri's rule.

It is this failure to galvanise a real sense of national unity or pride in the achievements of the country's diverse peoples that has contributed to the ongoing climate of racism, holding back the country. Sudan's leaders to date, whether political or religious, have not had the vision to work successfully to achieve this goal. Rather, successive governments

have seen the plethora of weapons available in the modern world as providing the best way to get what they want.

Racism affects the ability of the country to develop a coherent national identity and efforts by successive governments to Islamify non-Muslim parts of the country have been met with strong resistance. However, once again there is another chance to create a viable and vibrant nation, with the signing of the peace agreement to end the second civil war. It will require the ability to engender a new sense of national pride in a nation that has given itself very little to be proud about.

CHAPTER THREE

ARABS AND AFRICANS

New labels for old

Sudan's first civil war was described as being between northerners and southerners and initially the second conflict was also portrayed as a clash between the 'Muslim north and the Christian and animist south.'

However, another differentiation is becoming commonplace in discussions in the media and the diaspora. Instead of referring to northerners or southerners, that is, using geographical origin as an identifier, disparate Sudanese people or groups are now described as African or Arab. Arab in this context may have the same connotation of a dirty word for 'Africans' that southerner has had for some ('real') northern Sudanese.

Use of the African/Arab terminology has caught on, so much so that the more recent Darfur conflict is described by international media as a clash between Muslim Arab and Muslim African tribes. There has been a change in the way people look at the ethnic groups in Sudan and some Sudanese say it comes from the rhetoric of the SPLM.

Ideas of identity can be just as strong whether they are real or imagined. Rothchild says that ethnicity acts as "a pole around which group members can mobilise and compete effectively for state-controlled power, economic resources, positions, contracts, awards and constitutional protections" (Rothchild 1997: 4). One's origins may be imaginary, but as political memory interacts with past experience, "new socially constructed identities emerge and become the basis of a consciousness that in some instances can prove very destructive" (Rothchild 1997: 4).

The Minority Rights Group warns against using generic labels to delineate ethnic groups in Sudan, arguing rigid classifications introduced during colonial times are artificial (Verney 1995: 39). "Although the nomenclature has come to shape the identity of the people concerned, it does not match the fluidity of the situation on the ground" (Verney 1995: 39).

During the first civil war, the military government under Abboud took a heavy-handed approach. The soldiers lacked political nouse, handling the situation in the south poorly and determined to keep power with the central government at all costs. Abboud and his team believed that the basic pillars of national unity were Islam and the Arabic language. Their often forceful encouragement of Islam and Arabic in the south aroused grave fears in the region. As part of this southern policy, the government also placed increasing restrictions on non-Sudanese Christians in the south, finally expelling all missionaries in 1964, on the charge that southern opposition to the government was the product of missionary plots (Voll & Voll 1985: 75).

There were also divisions within the south itself. By the mid-1970s, Equatorians were beginning to resent the more numerous Nilotic groups, especially the Dinka who made up half the population of the south. Atem notes that a past southern government headed by a Dinka made inexcusable mistakes, including appointing and protecting unqualified Dinka officials at the expense of competent, experienced non-Dinka (Atem 2003: 8). Woodward believes that the Dinka, "while far from homogenous ... were capable of displaying segmentary solidarity in the context of regional politics" (Woodward 1989: 145).

Malwal notes that Nimeiri's government was effective [at least for a time] in promoting Sudan as a "multi-racial, multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-political country" (Malwal 1981: 246-247). The government attempted to build on these multiplicities, to ensure that they enriched one another, "guaranteeing not only the national unity of the Sudan, but also its role as a microcosm of the Afro-Arab world – a melting pot of the Arab and African cultures" (Malwal 1981: 246-247).

But by 1995, an Amnesty report noted that "the labels Arab and African, Muslim and Christian, even northerner and southerner, have become intensely politicised" (Amnesty 1995: 5-6).

> Ethnic and religious identities are important factors in the deep political cleavages running through Sudanese society. They are used to mobilise political support, to assert difference, to claim superiority, to determine access to power and to define enemies (Amnesty 1995: 5-6).

Rothchild maintains that race and ethnicity can become a signalling device regardless of whether or not the racial or ethnic label is accurate, allowing people to be identified by social or economic characteristics, without resorting to elaborate verification procedures (Rothchild 1997: 215).

Identity problems and the toll of war

If Sudan does have an identity problem, this is arguably part of the reason for its civil wars. The failure to recognise and treat the poison of racism is preventing the country from becoming a productive nation. Akuany argues that a country founded on inequalities or human rights abuses cannot enjoy stability (Akuany 2001: 3). He says a country which is "dominantly multi-racial, multi-religious, multi-cultural, and multi-linguistic cannot successfully be transformed into any one single racial, cultural, religious and linguistic community, without holocaust being committed" (Akuany 2001: 4)

Early governments played on religious rather than racial sentiments of north against south, but the approach shifted and by 1985, Sudan's government-controlled media was describing a coup attempt as planned by "plotters from the west and traitors from the south" (Malwal 1985: 22-23). Malwal argued that it was "tragic that racism should be deliberately fanned by the state in a country where it has played a fairly marginal role in the past" (Malwal 1985: 22-23).

However, Amnesty asserts that both the government and the SPLA have "exploited ethnic differences and competition over resources in ways which have pitted community against community and resulted in the massive abuse of human rights" (Amnesty 1995: 71).

The civil war in Sudan has taken a heavy toll. The US Committee for Refugees estimates about two million people have died, victims of violence or related starvation and disease (ICG January 2002: 3). Around four million people have fled their homes for other parts of Sudan, while at least 500,000 have fled to neighbouring countries and as a result, "one out of every eight people rendered homeless by war around the world is from Sudan" (ICG January 2002: 3).

Many more men, women and children have been injured permanently and/or forced to flee their homes. But it is civilians rather than soldiers who have suffered in greater numbers. They die from famine and disease, rather than gunshot wounds, unable to cultivate their fields, unable to attend schools or visit health clinics, unable to access more than subsistence levels of aid from humanitarian groups.

On both sides, most fighters are southerners, whether from the SPLM or government-supported militia drawn from rival southern tribes. Even Sudan's army has large numbers of southerners dragged from Khartoum streets and sent off to fight their southern brothers (Martin 2002: 4). Jok argues that the militias and the militarisation of ethnic identity is one of the most pressing issues in the south, adding that the government sponsors the militia groups to wreck any chance of southern unity (Jok 2004: 3).

Khartoum's paramilitary Popular Defence Force (PDF) consists of young Muslim conscripts and volunteers whose training is more religious than military and includes long lectures on Islam from members of the NIF (Burr & Collins 2003: 16). The government also arms *murahileen* militias - Baggara tribesmen who have escalated historic feuds with the neighbouring Dinka over grazing land, cattle raiding and abduction of slaves (Martin 2002: 4).

The price of oil

The scorched earth policy has been successfully pursued by the government in the oil fields and in areas hosting the oil pipeline as it runs from the south to Port Sudan. The PDF was invaluable here, along with southern militia forces, sometimes recruited from units of the SPLA who were dissatisfied with John Garang (Burr & Collins 2003: 254).

UN agencies, foreign governments and non government organisations all indicated that Khartoum was working hard to displace populations from the oil concessions areas (Martin 2002: 5). Verney argues:

> People in the areas around the militarised oil installations and the pipeline route have been subject to devastating attacks by government forces for years. They are being driven from their homes by air-raids and bombardment and by militias supported by the government, resulting in horrendous suffering (Verney et al 1999: 4).

Sudan's oil income is currently at least US $500m a year and has kick-started the economy, freeing the country from dependence on wealthy Arab and Muslim states (Martin 2002: 5, Burr & Collins 2003: 255). In 2002, GDP grew at around 5.1 per cent, almost twice the world average and oil production was steady at 245,000 barrels a day (ICG December 2002: 18). The war costs an estimated US $1 million per day, but the year after the Port Sudan pipeline was completed, the government was able to double its arms purchases and military spending and boost production of ammunition and small arms (ICG January 2002: 102).

The oil slick has also brought an air of respectability for the government, with Malaysia's Petronas, China's National Petroleum Company, Sweden's Lundin Oil, Austria's OMV and France's TotalFinaElf among those keen to do business with Sudan (ICG January 2002: 100-102). Martin notes:

> Prior to the oil boom, Western diplomats in Khartoum seemed largely concerned with Sudan's chronic droughts, floods, refugee crises and human rights violations. Since oil entered the picture, however, foreign emissaries have become more circumspect in their criticism of the regime (Martin 2002: 5).

However, Canada's Talisman left the arena after human rights groups lobbied the Canadian government, claiming that Talisman was at least a passive party to human rights abuses perpetrated in the oilfields by government-supported forces (ICG January 2002: 100-102).

War of resistance and tribal wars

There are clearly multiple identities in Sudan, identities that are shaped and moulded by the needs of the particular group and by the events around them. Mahmoud says the challenges facing Sudan are not unique.

> At the heart of these challenges lies the question of identity and since 1989 this has become closely intertwined with the role of Islam. Questions of identity, religion and cultural hegemony cannot be divorced from what ultimately underlies them: struggle over power and access to resources (Mahmoud 2001: 10).

The war in the south is a war of resistance fought for centuries in different forms "against the Turks, Egyptians, British and the Arabs of northern Sudan" (Young 2003: 423). Young argues:

> Feelings of anti-Arabism and anti-Islam are visceral in the southern region and find expression in resentment against attempts by Muslims from the north to stop the Africans in the south from drinking and practicing Christianity and traditional creeds. The analogy to apartheid and white colonialism may be overdrawn, but these sentiments reveal a strong affirmation of the peoples' African character and culture. They are also a rejection of the assumption that Arab culture is superior and destined to assimilate them (Young 2003: 423).

Agaw asserts that when it comes to internal fighting, southern tribes have learnt from their past mistakes.

> The experience of the south in self-rule proved that during 11 years from 1972 to 1983 all tribes realised, in spite of their diversity, that what ought to be done was to stay together in one entity. So when the south cracked with division during 1981, the people knew later on that it had been a wrong idea to stay apart from each other (Agaw 1996: 4).

However Rothchild has some cautionary words, noting that ethnic groups are not usually unitary actors for negotiating purposes (Rothchild 1997: 4-5). He maintains that intra-group problems persist despite nation-building, "allowing political entrepreneurs the option of interacting with rival factions on separate bases" (Rothchild 1997: 4-5).

Despite Agaw's optimism, the Sudanese government has been successful in playing off rival southern factions against each other, in particular pitting Garang's SPLM-Mainstream against Riek Machar and Lam Akol's SPLM-United. The tribal allegiances of the three leaders (Garang is Dinka, Machar is Nuer, Akol is Collo[11]) fostered perceptions of bias and favouritism. When Machar and Akol broke from Garang in 1991, there was much bloody fighting, including a massacre by Nuer forces of Dinka civilians in Garang's home area of Bor.

Kurimoto notes that "military conflict since 1984 has exacerbated existing tribal or ethnic hostility: Pari versus Lotuho, Pari versus Toposa, Dinka versus Mundari and so on" (Kurimoto 1994: 110). However, Kurimoto argues that it is impossible to determine how much conflict is due to ethnic issues and group concerns and how much stems from regional and national matters (Kurimoto 1994: 110). Both the government and the SPLA have manipulated 'traditional' ethnic antagonism to their advantage, maintains Kurimoto (Kurimoto 1994: 110).

Young says that there is little doubt the SPLM is Dinka-dominated, with Dinka from the Bor area holding "a disproportionately large number of posts in its leadership" (Young 2003: 425). Yet he adds:

[11] Increasingly the Collo (pronounced Chollo) use their own name for themselves, rather than the colonial corruption of Shilluk. Dinka is also a colonial corruption, they call themselves the Jieng.

> Studies of revolutionary movements suggest that some groups invariably have a higher level of political consciousness and greater commitment to armed struggle than other equally oppressed groups. The issue is not that some ethnic groups have a greater willingness to take up arms, but whether their leadership ensures others are not excluded from the political and military hierarchy (Young 2003: 425).

It is not a Dinka tradition to try to dominate another, argues Malwal. He says the fact they make up nearly half the south makes them difficult to ignore in either national or southern politics (Malwal 1981: 75). However, their sheer numbers also attract suspicion from others. Malwal continues: "Dinka society is a truly free, open and democratic society, in which each and every man's view finds its expression, though that has, of course, been described by some as anarchy" (Malwal 1981: 75).

The Nuer have similar traditions and find their own unique ways of resolving disputes, notes Ashworth (Ashworth 2004: 37).

> They do not recognise centralised authority but have a very participatory form of decentralised governments ... Most factions and movements within the Nuer community talk to each other directly or through intermediaries, even when they are at opposite ends of the political and military spectrum. Many outsiders are amazed at the speed with which southern Sudanese in general, not only the Nuer, can reconcile after the most appalling splits and atrocities (Ashworth 2004: 37).

While Nilotic tribes such as the Nuer, Collo and Dinka may fight among themselves, they also regard each other as distant blood relatives, Malwal argues (Malwal 1981: 76). But he says that this is not the case with other southern tribes, "especially those from Equatoria who remain very suspicious of alleged Dinka domination" (Malwal 1981: 76).

Arabs, Africans and the alienation of a nation

When Sudan projects its image as that of an Arab nation, many Sudanese feel alienated. This is a country that does not recognise all its children. Ahmed Diraige, opposition politician and a past governor of Darfur, argues:

> The exclusive identification of Sudan as an Arab and Islamic nation has been silently resented by the indigenous Africans and non-Muslim Sudanese, because it excluded them from the opportunity of acquiring political power or effectively sharing it (cited in Moszynski 2003: 19).

National Islamic Front policies polarised Sudan by identifying it as an Arab country: "In spite of the NIF claim that the south is exempted from Islamisation policies, that claim is not true. There is a stark discrimination against non-Muslim southerners all over the country" (Agaw 1996: 3).

Nevertheless, Novati and Belluci argue that the northern judicial system worked relatively smoothly and in fact better than many other systems in Africa, at least before Bashir ousted Turabi in late 1999 (Novati & Belluci 2000: 110).

Sidahmed is adamant that the popular image of a Sudanese war between the Muslim north and Christian and animist south is inaccurate, with the reality far more complex (Sidahmed 1996: 8-9). He argues that the debate involves "conflicting blueprints and visions for the future of the Sudan, focusing on Islamist or secular platforms" (Sidahmed 1996: 8-9). There are conflicting visions of Sudanese identity, should Sudan be viewed as having an African, Arabic-Islamic or Afro-Arab identity (Sidahmed 1996: 8-9).

Deng asserts the words Arabism and Africanism have multiple meanings in the Sudanese context, "most groups claiming genealogical links with Arab ancestry believe they are racially and culturally Arab, complemented by Islam" (Deng 1995: 3). In Sudan, colour matters:

> Northern racial pride focuses on being the right brown colour of skin, considered the standard for the north and therefore for the Sudan. To be too light for a Sudanese is to risk being considered a foreigner, a *khawaja* (European), a Middle Eastern Arab, or worse, a *hallabi*, a term used for a gypsy-type racial group, considered among the lowest of the light-skinned races. The other side of the coin is, of course, looking down on the black race as inferior, a condition from which one has mercifully been redeemed. Northern Sudanese racism and cultural chauvinism, therefore, condemns both the very dark and the very light (Deng 1995: 5).

Yet the more northerners identify as Arabs, the more the south "asserts its Africanness as a counter-identity," Deng argues (Deng 1995: 4).

In the SPLM, it is not so much that the Dinka assumes superiority, but more that the SPLM has done little to embrace other tribes, "leaving it exposed to factionalism and strife," asserts Young (Young 2003: 425). He notes splits in the movement have been about power rather than ideology and often become linked to tribe, that is, to race (Young 2003: 426).

Southerners are attracted to the SPLM because of its resistance to the north, Young maintains (Young 2003: 426). He says that "this sometimes produces denigration of the northern *jellaba* [merchants] that verges on racism," including comments that the only good (Sudanese) Arab is a dead one (Young 2003: 426).

Decrying racism among southerners, Atem notes "it is not uncommon to listen to a conversation among southern Sudanese, usually the elite, making unflattering statements about northerners whom they refer to as Arabs or *mundukuru*"[12] (Atem 2003: 18). Southerners in the diaspora may also echo these views, albeit in a watered down version. "A northerner will never accept a southerner as an equal. *Jellaba* will try to be artificially nice, they will give you a business smile," said O, a Sudanese-Australian from the south (Levy December 2004).

However, when Sudanese leave Sudan, some find it opportune to discard their Arab identification. Says K, a Sudanese-Australian from the north: "Some Sudanese [in Australia] won't live in Arab areas, but in Sudan, they consider themselves an Arab. Out of Sudan, they don't want to be Arabs, they say Arabs are unsophisticated" (Levy January 2005). Abusabib notes the irony that when travelling in Europe, "for a deeply Arab-oriented Northerner, a nod of greeting from a fellow African and the word 'nigger' directed at him or her by a racist have, in fact, the same effect, that is in both cases this Northerner is reminded that he or she is not an Arab" (Abusabib 2001: 96).

[12] Pejorative term from Equatoria.

Identity and international relations

On the international stage, Sudan takes a seat at both Arab and African tables. At the political level, as opposed to the personal, how welcome are these African Arabs in the inner arena of the Gulf states? Are they treated as equals?

As a government minister during the Nimeiri years, Malwal understood the workings of Arab investment in the Sudan; but he maintains that Sudanese got it wrong if they thought they could attract Arab investors by emphasising their Arab-Islamic identity (cited in Deng 1995: 379).

> Throughout the period I was in the central government and in the Ministry of Culture and Information, if anything, one detected a certain degree of unease in the Arab world when the issue of the Arab or Islamic identity of the Sudan was played up in these economic discussions. The Arabs wanted to separate their religious or racial affinity with the Sudan from their economic interest in the country (cited in Deng 1995: 379).

In Deng's opinion, Sudanese Arabs are keener to belong to the Arab world than the Arab world is to have them (Deng 1995: 380). He says that Sudanese working in the Gulf states capitalise on their identity as Arabs and Muslims, but these guest workers have also been disappointed by racist treatment at the hands of their fellow Arabs because their skin is black, "even though they perceive themselves as racially and culturally Arab and even though Islam is supposed to be colour-blind" (Deng 1995: 380).

As it transpired, the Gulf job market dried up when tens of thousands of Sudanese workers were expelled after the Gulf War, in retaliation for Sudan's support for Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

Sudan as a Muslim nation

Sudan may be a second class citizen of the Arab world, but the country does have a strong identity as a Muslim nation. However, fostering this identity inevitably creates tensions and attempting to do so, in my view, shows a lack of foresight and poor leadership. Umma Party leader Sadiq Al Mahdi is a case in point. He has been Prime

Minister twice, is the brother-in-law of Hassan Al Turabi and great-grandson of the Mahdi. He has had many opportunities to work to bridge the divide between the different parts of the country, but he has failed to do this, in other words - like so many Sudanese leaders, he has been uninspiring.

As far back as 1966, while Sadiq was touring Somalia prior to becoming Prime Minister, he made a telling statement: "The failure of Islam in southern Sudan would be the failure of the Sudanese Muslims to the international Islamic cause. Islam has a holy mission in Africa and southern Sudan is the beginning of that mission" (cited in Malwal 1981: 41).

It is true that the statement was made nearly forty years ago. But it also outlines some of the dilemmas for conservative Islamic forces in Sudan, who wish to develop their own unique Sudanese model of government. It also outlines the dilemma for the people of the south, for the Nuba and the Ingessana, for whom "the identification with either politicised Islam or Arabism was a matter to be contested and resisted" (Mahmoud 2001: 7).

Lesch notes that in 1994, Sadiq's Umma Party still seemed to be wide of the mark when analysing the controversial issue of self-determination. An Umma Party statement declared that "self-searching into the past" led the party to recognise that "modern Sudanese self-consciousness centred ... on their Islamic-Arabic identity" (cited in Lesch 1998: 217).

This shows a serious lack of insight. Given the makeup of the country, it is at the very least unrealistic to expect to build a fully Muslim nation, unless those of differing views are prepared to oblige by vanishing into thin air. Further, those Sudanese preferring a secular, democratic style of government have a role to play in deciding whether to allow Islamists to usurp democratic mechanisms to gain power to implement their own programs.

Warburg says that Islamist movements, such as the Muslim Brothers and the National Islamic Front (NIF), may take part in democratic processes, only to distort democracy

once they achieve their goal (Warburg 1999: 4). He argues that the NIF has regularly changed its slogans, "introducing and abandoning concepts such as self reliance, return to the roots, Islamic social planning and the comprehensive call to God" (De Waal 2001: 119). He notes that in "multi-ethnic, plural Sudan, a homogenous Islamist enterprise can ultimately only be implemented by coercion and coercion is always ugly" (De Waal 2001: 120).

Novati and Belluci maintain that democracy and human rights are not synonymous, although they say the concepts are often confused by Westerners critiquing Islam (Novati & Belluci 2000: 109). "The question is not how the *sharia* can fit into a democratic system, but rather which kind of democracy corresponds to the *umma* (nation)" (Novati & Belluci 2000: 109-110).

It is not just the southern Christians, Copts and other non-Muslims who are opposed to an Islamic state. Malwal says that "many pious and well-intentioned Muslims think and feel the country would do well not to mix religion with politics" (Malwal 1981: 252). The only guarantee of the ideal Islamic state would be for all Sudanese "to become Muslims overnight, and devoted and practising Muslims at that," he notes wryly (Malwal 1981: 252).

Amnesty notes that "bigots on all sides, Muslims and Christians alike, have exploited religion, making it a significant factor in the continued fighting" (Amnesty 1995: 57). Amnesty says the government is trying to morally reorient Sudanese society, including using the *sharia*-based Penal Code 1991 and strict codes of public morality (Amnesty 1995: 57).

Although *sharia* is not applied in the south, for many southerners, especially those living in the north, the law "confirms their belief that they are viewed as second class citizens by the government" (Amnesty 1995: 57). On the one hand, the government has described the war as "a jihad, a holy war against unbelievers in Islam," on the other, some SPLA supporters say they are Christians resisting the spread of Islam, nevertheless, there are

Muslims and Christians on both sides (Amnesty 1995: 57). Racism and religious bigotry guide the behaviour of some powerful and influential people in the war zone; ethnicity and intolerance lie behind some of the worst violations of human rights (Amnesty 1995: 57).

Ryle argues that "ruling elites in Khartoum view Sudan as a Muslim country and an integral part of the Arab world. Their opponents – not only southerners – see it as a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual state, one in which Arabs (though not Muslims) are a minority" (Ryle 2002: 3).

The role of Sudanese Islam

Surely Islam has a role to play in a peaceful resolution of Sudan's problems, not just the war, but the clash of religions and races and cultures. Saikal argues that since the early seventh century, relations between Islam and the "largely Christian West have been marked by long periods of peaceful coexistence, but also by many instances of tension, hostility and mutual recrimination" (Saikal 2003: 24).

Saikal notes that "peaceful coexistence produced examples of majestic cooperation …but the periods of tension were created or exploited by those elements from both sides that found deterioration of relations advantageous to their causes above and beyond religion" (Saikal 2003: 24). Again, this is the pattern that has been followed time and again in Sudan, with race and religion providing the perfect delineators.

In Sudan, it has been the case that under good leadership, tribes with common borders, including nomads who travel through the lands of others, have found ways to coexist, with or without some conflict. The Ngok Dinka and the Baggara Humr (Misseriya) in Southern Kordofan, are a prime example, with Deng noting inter-racial contact and cross cultural exchange has been facilitated by mutual recognition, respect and cooperation (Deng 1995: 245).

Sudan has a number of versions of Islam and is (or was) home to some significant Islamic icons, from Sadiq's great-grandfather Al Mahdi in the 1880s, to Republican Brother Mahmoud Mohamed Taha who was executed for apostasy under Nimeiri, to Islamic scholar and former Attorney-General Hassan Al Turabi.

Contemporary Sudanese militant Islamism has appropriated the Mahdist myth for its own ends, argues De Waal (De Waal 2004: 4). The Mahdi's influence has not been confined to Sudan, notes Saikal, as his tradition of "Puritanism and Islamic resistance to outside domination became a recurring event in the Muslim world" (Saikal 2003: 35).

On the other hand, Mahmoud Mohamed Taha's approach – and apparently his crime - was to reinterpret *sharia*, arguing that "what was appropriate for seventh century Arabia could not be equally suited to twentieth century conditions" (Deng 1995: 125). His demise may have cheated Sudan out of a 'third way' for resolving its identity dilemmas, Deng argues.

> In the long run, the philosophy of the Republicans might have been more successful in promoting identification with Islam than the more coercive models that operated. Depending on whether such a tolerant process of assimilation into the Islamic mould would have been a good or a bad thing for the south, the suppression of Taha's perspective meant that an opportunity to develop a more comprehensive, integrative sense of national identity was lost (Deng 1995: 127).

There is another dimension to Sudanese Islamism: "the encounter between the Arab orientation of the Muslim Brothers and an indigenous theocratic tradition in West African Islam" (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 77). This Islamist tradition embraces elements of both Sufism and Wahabism, but is "a black 'African' tradition rather than an Arab one. It disavows the powerful centralised Sufi orders characteristic of the Nile Valley and is the vehicle for a popular, messianic tradition" (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 77).

Sudan's most famous Muslim son is Hassan Al Turabi, "one of the most outstanding thinkers and practitioners of political Islam" (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 75). It is difficult to argue with their assessment, but one could also postulate that Turabi has served Islam and Sudan poorly by failing to address the realities of the ethnic-religious

mix in his country. How different the past two decades could have been if Turabi had showered bouquets of unity and multiculturalism rather than Islamic brickbats.

Turabi views the Islamic state as inevitable as it presents the only viable alternative to so-called Western democracy.

> People have come to believe that it seems democracy would never breed Islam and if it threatens to do so, it will be aborted by someone from outside or inside ... if you want to assert indigenous values, originality and independence against the West, then Islam is the only doctrine that has become the national doctrine (cited in Warburg 1999: 7).

But De Waal and Abdel Salaam are tantalised by echoes of Western social science in Turabi's writings, hints that he has reconciled Islamism with liberal modernity (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 75).

> Turabi's experiment is an important and instructive exercise in broadening the Islamist political imagination. But it too has been shipwrecked on the rocks of reality, in part because of its inescapable embrace of violence (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 75).

The key steps to implement Turabi's vision have been taken by the army, with the NIF using state power to enact an Islamisation strategy called the civilisation project (*al mashru' al hadhari*) – also sometimes the Islamic project. The project's core ideas were clearest in the "comprehensive call program (*al da'wa al shamla*) that peaked in 1992-6, but whose precepts informed official Islamisation policies both before and since" (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 89).

The Islamists seized power under Omer Hassan Al Bashir in 1989, only the second such group in the world to take power, with Iran the first. Lusk notes they were not "disgruntled non-commissioned officers or even the then highly professional senior officers. This was a dedicated political party – so organised and well financed that it had spent years planning for power" (Lusk 2004: 13).

Islamists infiltrated the public service, taking low profile jobs, often in remote areas and they also subsidised school teachers (Lusk 2004:13). However, hard line fundamentalism was not popular among Sudanese: "Sudanese Islam is traditionally tolerant and owes

much to Sufi teachings" (Lusk 2004: 13). The National Islamic Front won less than ten per cent of the vote in partial elections in 1986, but Lusk believes it would fare even worse today and in any case, cannot afford to hold elections promised as part of the peace process (Lusk 2004: 13).

Chief peace negotiator and First Vice President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha[13] has played a central role in Sudan's Islamic social planning, establishing the social planning ministry to pursue his goals "in accordance with the NIF interpretation of the sharia" (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 89).

The comprehensive *da'wa* program was ambitious and complex, bringing together education, proselytising, humanitarian, development, financial and counter-insurgency efforts (African Rights 1997: Chapter 9, De Waal 2001: 121). Comprehensive *da'wa* moulds itself to fit different situations, for example in the Nuba Mountains, it was associated with *jihad* while in much of northern Sudan, it is part of Islamic social planning (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 89).

The program reached its peak in Southern Blue Nile, home to the Ingessana people, many of whom had supported SPLA incursions into the area in the late 1980s. The government was keen to pacify the area and poured in resources, promising the area would be transformed (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 90). Locals were bemused by programs such as *mawakib al nur* (Processions of Light):

> It comprised Quranic recital and memorisation, literacy classes, military service in the PDF camps, construction of mosques and building of schools and health centres. A community leader described how they grouped people into camps. 'Each village had its own camp. In the camp, they brought amirs who gave instruction. It started at 5am with prayers, reciting the Quran and Islamic orientation. It included military drill. They brought NIF girls to teach the women' (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 90-91).

[13] As part of the peace process, Taha has agreed to stand down as first vice president in favour of SPLM leader John Garang in late February 2005. His future role in the government is not yet clear.

Government development programs in contested regional areas often have multiple agendas. Ashworth describes the scene in Malakal, a southern regional capital in Upper Nile that spent much of the war years as a poorly serviced government siege town.

> Someone who had not seen Malakal for 13 years or so would be struck by the positive developments in the town – new air-conditioned airport buildings, electricity 24 hours a day, new tarmac roads, working telephones and television, a water supply for most of the town, a university, many new cars – a much greater investment than Wau or Juba ... But there is an overriding impression that one is now in an Arabic and Islamic town rather than a southern one. New mosques are everywhere. Local churches report that Islamic agencies and institutions have taken over schools and plots of land with impunity (Ashworth 2004: 167).

On the other hand, people who have visited SPLM-held areas in southern Sudan speak of an increase in the number of churches in Bahr Al Ghazal[14] and also in the number of people embracing Christianity.

However, Hoile[15] asserts that media claims of a Christian majority in the south are inaccurate and distort the situation. Hoile argues that Christians account for less than one-fifth of the southern population, and there "appear to be marginally more Christians than Muslims. Christians may comprise four per cent of the national population" (Hoile 2003: 68-69). Media claims of a Christian south and a Christian SPLA ignore the reality that many southerners adhere to traditional beliefs.

Christians in Sudan may have fears of Muslims based purely on anecdotal evidence as well as on the actions of the Islamist government. Says O, a Sudanese-Australian and a Christian, "as they despise, us, we also despise them. We don't like the way they wash and eat" (Levy 2004). Further, Christian missionaries may have passed on their own prejudices. Malwal explains that in past years:

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[14] Comment to me in September 2004 by a Sudanese-Australian.

[15] David Hoile and his parent body, the European Sudanese Public Affairs Council, are one of the few English language groups to regularly criticize established journalists and academics writing on issues such as politics, slavery and human rights abuses in Sudan. In return, Hoile has been denounced as a paid lobbyist for the Sudanese government, a supporter of a diverse range of groups including the Nicaraguan Contras and Mozambique's RENAMO; and his attendance at a US conference on Sudan in 2004 provoked demonstrations (Loeb 2004, Lowles & Silver 2000).

> A young southerner leaving [boarding] school for vacation with his family was always told not to involve himself in tribal religious practices and beliefs because they were all evil and ungodly ... It was not too difficult to build a southern prejudice against the north in southern schools where the Arab role in selling and buying Africans into slavery was part of the history that was taught ... Southerners were sometimes told that 'these Arabs have bad ways that are incompatible with your good tribal ways.' So there were more substantial prejudices that the imperialists encouraged in the south against the north than southerners publicly admit (Malwal 1981: 36).

Sudanese Coptic Christians

There is also another group of Christians in Sudan, mainly in the north, who do not owe their religious allegiance to the ministrations of colonially inspired missionaries. Copts have played a strong role in the nation, particularly in business. The community numbered around 200,000 in 1995, but many have since fled to other countries, including Australia.

In the past, the Copts had two bishops and more than 20 churches, spread across northern towns including Dongala, Atbara, Wad Medani, Port Sudan, El Obeid and Khartoum. Copts have been present in Sudan for more than 1300 years, but because of their "advanced literacy and numeracy, their role has been more significant than their numbers would suggest" (Verney et al 1995: 26).

The Copts' "adoption of a passive, non confrontational role coupled with their light skin colour has helped them to avoid the worst excesses of religious and racial discrimination, but in recent years they have been harassed and intimidated by the NIF regime" (Verney et al 1995: 26). The harassment has taken various forms such as government controls on business licences, forced military service, dismissal from the public service and confiscation of Christian schools (Verney et al 1995: 26).

In February 1991, a Coptic Sudan Airways pilot – and son of a Coptic priest – was executed for illegal possession of foreign currency, a restriction that was dropped soon after (Verney et al 1995: 26). He had refused an offer of a pardon and money if he

converted to Islam – the incident was enough to prompt many Copts to pack their bags and leave Sudan permanently (Verney et al 1995: 26).

Inside Sudan, the Copts are viewed as a community that keeps to itself, another factor which some feel could have led to feelings of persecution. Says S, a Sudanese-Australian of Coptic background: "I never felt discriminated against because of religion, while Copts themselves are feeling this religious discrimination. Maybe when you look at me, I look like a north Sudanese. Copts live in a ghetto, they are not open with the Sudanese community, therefore they feel discrimination" (Levy 2005).

But S went on to discuss an area of Omdurman[16] where Copts had lived since 1818, before the Mahdiya, where they had been accepted as Sudanese. "During the 90s, when Islam was high, we were discriminated against. [There was] an external influence on these people – government, propaganda, teachers, schools – people felt Christians were foreigners" (Levy 2005). S argued this was part of the government's divide and rule policy, passed down from the British, "problems were created by the regime to eliminate powerful economic tribes in the way of the Islamic Front" (Levy 2005).

Noble spiritual beliefs

There is another group often mentioned in dispatches but whose actual voices are seldom heard in much of the recent literature about Sudan – with the notable exception of Deng. Animists/theists/people with noble spiritual beliefs are close to invisible in news articles about southern Sudan. Yet, in a 1995 report, Amnesty International noted that "most of the rural population follow their own religious traditions" (Amnesty 1995: 5).

Rarely do we find any discussion of how these people would wish to see their country governed. Southerners who are educated tend to espouse Christianity, at least publicly,

[16] Greater Khartoum consists of Three Towns arranged around the confluence of the Blue and White Niles: Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman, the seat of the Mahdiya.

and whatever they may feel about the beliefs of their parents or grandparents or cousins, it is not widely discussed in print as a viable alternative to an Islamic political tradition.

Languages in schools

Communication is a crucial issue and one of the most sensitive topics concerns the use of Arabic and English in the south and the transitional areas of Abyei, Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile and which language should be the lingua franca. Many southerners want initial schooling to be in their mother tongue – be it Bari or Collo, Madi or Zande, moving to English or Arabic pattern schooling later on. Ideally, a student would then acquire proficiency in mother tongue and either English or Arabic, plus a working knowledge of the other language they did not major in.

In the north, English is also popular as a second language and viewed as the language for getting ahead in banking and other business. "Our boss told us that anyone who did not learn English would lose their job in a few years," said a Sudanese bank officer.[17]

Agaw notes that Arabic has been spread throughout the south by merchants and many southerners speak Arabic, or its close cousin, Juba Arabic. "Even inside the SPLM, the language is Arabic in all fields of communication. You are in no need to use a tank to force people to adopt a specific language as languages normally compete with each other" (Agaw 1996: 6).

But employing teachers for the south and for far flung regional areas has been a problem. Malwal notes that around 1974-75, many southern schools were closed due to lack of teachers (Malwal 1981: 229). "Large numbers of northern Sudanese teachers who had been transferred to the south to teach Arabic had refused to go and there were no southern teachers to replace them" (Malwal 1981: 229).

[17] Comment made to me in Khartoum in 2004.

Likewise, expatriate teachers keen to work in southern Sudan as part of a national government scheme in the 1980s told me they had real difficulty in getting government permission to fly to their posts. Only a chance meeting with a relative of then First Vice President Joseph Lagu led to intervention by the former Anyanya chief to resolve the impasse. On arrival in the south, the problems continued with salaries frequently delayed or never arriving at all.

Ethnic politics and abuse of human rights

In Sudan, Islam has fallen hostage to Arab racism and ethnic politics and the NIF lacks a strategy for "reconciling political and ethnic plurality," argue De Waal and Abdel Salaam (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 98). They maintain rural minorities - such as the Fur, Masalit and Berti of Darfur; the Baggara Arabs of Kordofan and Darfur and the Beja of the east - are the most devout and have the strongest history of militant Mahdism (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 99).

> Arab neo-fundamentalists commonly regard some of these rural groups' practices as un-Islamic and part of the program of Islamic social practices was to cure what the da'waist agency *Al Ithar Al Khairiya* (altruism or purity) called 'social cavities,' by, for example, sponsoring mass [male] circumcision ceremonies among uncircumcised Beja. Many Beja themselves were driven to take up arms against the government, citing the government's repression of their form of Islam. Devout neo-fundamentalists from the Beja and other non-Arab groups reject the NIF assaults as racist (De Waal & Abdel Salaam 2004: 99).

There were similar clashes between the government and the Nuba people of southern Kordofan. The Nuba number about 1.5 million people and include Muslims, Christians and followers of traditional religions. They are a collection of ethnic groups speaking more than 50 related languages and live in the picturesque hills named for them, the Nuba Mountains (Amnesty 1995: 78).

Their tragedy is that they live on the fault line between north and south, a divide that also delineates Dinka and Misseriya areas such as Abyei and the Ingessana homeland of Southern Blue Nile. "Neglected and discriminated against by successive governments in Khartoum, many Nuba sympathised with the southern-led rebellion of the SPLA in the

early 1980s. In 1985, civil unrest ignited in the Nuba Mountains between units of the SPLA and local Arab militia. Since then, the region has been one of the fronts in Sudan's civil war" (De Waal 2001: 117-118).

In Amnesty's words, "many Nuba claim that of all the peoples in Sudan who regard themselves as Africans they are the most exposed to the possible political and cultural domination of the Arab north" (Amnesty 1995: 78). Thousands have been killed and tens of thousands forced to move to government-controlled 'peace villages' (Amnesty 1995: 78).

> Women have been raped, women and children abducted. The destruction of homes, grain stores, livestock and crops has created a famine in rural areas, deliberately exacerbated by military action to sever areas not under government control from the outside world. Hundreds of Nuba leaders and political activists have been arrested (Amnesty 1995: 78).

The nature of Nuba culture is an affront to the Khartoum government and the Islamist project, argues de Waal:

> Here were a people who embraced diversity and tolerance, for whom the right to practice their cultural traditions was highly valued and seen as quite compatible with following revealed religion. Many specific Nuba practices, such as public nudity and various forms of dancing, were seen as primitive and uncivilised by Sudanese Muslims from Khartoum and especially so by Islamists (De Waal 2001: 122).

A massacre of Dinka people by Rizeigat people in the northern town of Ed Dhein in 1987 is a well known and well documented example of Sudanese racism at its most vicious. Hundreds of Dinka were burnt alive in railway carriages by local Rizeigat (including men, women and children) after they sought refuge with the police from violence in the town.

Academics Mahmud and Baldo investigated reports of the massacre and published a full report in Arabic (and later in English) that was widely distributed. Inevitably, they also suffered jail and other harassments for their bravery. They explained that the scene for the atrocities had been set much earlier:

> When the massacre occurred, Dhein was not a quiet, peaceful or harmonious town. Its society was impregnated with the forces and elements of the massacre. Religious fanaticism was on the rise. Competition over resources and services started to be played along ethnic lines. A new Rizeigat ethnic identity was being mobilised against other identities. Thuggery and disdain for convention and law became common among the Rizeigat youth. The social fabric of the Rizeigat community started to disintegrate. There was a generational conflict between the old and the young and class conflict between the haves and the have nots – these mainly young. And there were political divisions. These conflicts interacted with ethnic violence, armed banditry and slavery to generate the psychosis necessary for the massacre. The church in Dhein was the focus of religious fanaticism, competition over land and irrational suspicion. In 1986, some 400 Dhein Muslims signed a petition to the judge asking for the removal of the church from the town (Mahmud & Baldo 1987: 31)

But the Rizeigat were not the only group carrying out atrocities. Africa Watch outlines the gruesome activities of the Missiriya militia, some of whom were armed by the government and tasked with protecting Chevron's oilfields at Bentiu (Africa Watch 1990: 88):

> The pattern of a raid by the Misseriya *murahileen* is essentially similar to that of the Rizeigat. Villages are surrounded, people shot as they escape, burned in their houses, or are captured and executed, by shooting, burning, beating or drowning. Women and children are taken as captives. Men are castrated. Houses, grain stores and trees are destroyed. Cattle are taken (Africa Watch 1990: 88).

The Misseriya also harassed Nuer famine migrants and became active in the Nuba Mountains in 1988. The group devastated Dinka areas in north-east Bahr Al Ghazal, killing tens of thousands of civilians, but there has been no official investigation into their activities (Africa Watch 1990: 89-91).

Africa Watch asserts that these activities resulted from a change of stance during the late 1980s by Sadiq Al Mahdi, when he repositioned himself from a "secular, liberal statesman to the fundamentalist aspiring Imam of the Ansar" (Africa Watch 1990: 19). "The old Mahdist alliance of Khartoum traders and western Baggara nomads reasserted itself: the former dictated the economic policy while the latter were given automatic weapons and a licence to attack and plunder Dinka populations in the south" (Africa Watch 1990: 19).

Equatorian concerns

Sadiq Al Mahdi also fuelled local disputes, especially Equatorian fears of Nilotic domination (Africa Watch 1990: 19).

> In the complex ethnic politics of Equatoria, tribes have often been pitted against their neighbours, with local conflicts often determining who sides with the government and who supports the SPLA. The government exploited this situation to arm and organise militias, as did the SPLA (Africa Watch 1990: 158).

Equatorians see themselves as closest to East Africa and many of the border tribes such as Madi and Acholi have relatives settled in Uganda. A Sudanese-Australian from Equatoria explains:

> The north is very far, their politics don't reach East Africa. We used to study in East Africa, we don't know Arabic well. But Dinka interact with northerners, they can live together no problem. Racism is there. We grew up like this, all Sudanese, this exists in everybody's heart. People in Equatoria love each other, but they don't like Dinka because of fighting over cattle between Dinka and Equatorians. Everybody also does not like the north, even Dinka is better than the north (Levy 2005)

There are legitimate concerns that intra-southern tensions may mar the peace process. However, while further Equatorian-Dinka tensions may be yet to come, Nuer-Dinka fighting surely reached its peak during the split between two rival factions of the SPLA. SPLA commanders in Upper Nile, Dr Riek Machar (Nuer) and Dr Lam Akol (Collo), split from the main group in August 1991, forming SPLA-Nasir, later known as SPLA-United. War broke out almost immediately between the two groups, with factions increasingly divided along ethnic lines, the Nasir group dominated by the Nuer, with SPLA-Mainstream led by the Dinka, Dr John Garang.

Amnesty notes both SPLA groups committed gross abuses of human rights, creating famine, killing villagers and exploiting ethnic tensions (Amnesty 1995: 89).

Slavery

To add to Sudan's woes and in particular those of the south, there has been a return to slavery, usually among displaced or otherwise vulnerable groups. The effects of the slaving raids of past centuries fuels poor relations even today, as Niblock outlines:

> The disruption to southern societies caused by slave raids emanating from northern Sudan – continuing over many centuries, but reaching its climax in the mid-nineteenth century – created a lasting racial antagonism on the part of the Negroid southerners towards the Arabs of northern Sudan (Niblock 1987: 149).

Now, the practice has been revived, starting around 1987, when stories surfaced about Dinka women and children enslaved by the Baggara of Kordofan and Darfur, along with accounts of kidnapping, captivity and forced labour amounting to slavery in SPLA areas (Africa Watch 1990: 139). Mahmud and Baldo blame the government for the return of slavery, saying the government policy of "arming Rizeigat militias and sending them into Dinka areas has created favourable conditions for the re-emergence of slavery" (Mahmud & Baldo 1987: 30).

However Africa Watch urges caution, arguing that Arab-Dinka relations are complex and not all Baggara Arabs are slavers. It notes Arab women seem opposed to the practice and "have often helped Dinka girls escape or given information to Dinka parents or others who are trying to locate captives" (Africa Watch 1995: 150).

The issue of slavery has also been controversial in other ways, with some critics denouncing the work of Swiss agency Christian Solidarity International which raises money to buy back slaves. Hoile is one of the most fervent critics, suggesting that those presenting as slaves may have been coached in how to act and what stories to tell (Hoile 2003: 83).

The debate about the most efficacious way of stamping out slavery is for another arena, however there can be absolutely no doubt the cruel trade does exist, whether it is called forced labour or slavery (Anti-Slavery Society 1999: 1). As recently as 2003, researchers

from the Rift Valley Institute conducted a survey of Bahr Al Ghazal to determine the extent of the practice. They walked and cycled, carrying questionnaires, clipboards and mosquito nets and recorded the age, gender, village and clan of missing people, as well as the circumstances of their abduction (BBC May 28, 2003). They found that more than 11,000 people had been abducted and while some may have found their way to camps for internally displaced people, it was reasonable to assume many were taken into captivity in the north (BBC May 28, 2003).

Slavery has a racial base and whether there be scams as well, whether some 'slaves' are 'pawns' - children 'loaned' by destitute families to do work around the home or farm until they can be bought back - does not detract from the clear racial element in the whole sorry saga.

It is this rampant racism which makes Sudan so vulnerable to rumour and intrigue, to cruel stories designed to cause trouble and inflame tensions. "In Sudan, it's like a class system, first class are Arab Muslims, second class are African Muslims, the rest are third class. If you become a Muslim and you speak Arabic, you are an Arab anyway. Uneducated Muslims are being manipulated," is the view of J, a Sudanese-Australian from the south (Levy 2004).

Sidahmed says that at independence, uneven development in the south was further complicated by racism and religion:

> Rampant racism demonstrated itself in the attitude of most of the northerners to the southerners. This was rooted in the history of the slave trade and slave institutions ... The educated southerners, who eventually led the political activity of the south, were products of the Christian missionary acculturation and were essentially secular in their political outlook, unlike the educated northerners who were essentially conformist to their Muslim tradition (Sidahmed 1996: 53).

The inequality extends to the political system with southerners effectively ineligible for the top post of president. In Rothchild's view, northerners dominate and their "general unwillingness to apply the proportionality principle for selecting cabinet ministers has contributed significantly to the conflict" (Rothchild 1997: 64-65). Civilian and military

governments have displayed different coalition-building tendencies, he says. Under Abboud, 7.6 per cent of cabinet ministers were southerners (yearly average), under Nimieri, 7.2 per cent, while civilian governments scored 14 per cent and appointed more southerners to influential ministerial positions, he argues (Rothchild 1997: 64-65).

Under Bashir, only two of the 13 northern Sudanese in the government were neither members nor sympathisers of the Muslim Brothers, while one of the three southerners was active in the NIF (*Guardian Weekly*, July 30, 1989, cited in Rothchild 1997: 65). "Bashir remained part of the exclusivist military tradition, limiting the participation of an effective southern opposition voice and gravely complicating the process of developing effective rules and routines for political cooperation," asserts Rothchild (Rothchild 1997: 65).

Power-sharing is a feature of the recent peace agreement (see Chapter 5), but many problems could have been avoided if the north had been committed to equality with the south from the beginning, says Agaw.

> Cultures of the north and their southern counterparts are closer to each other than cultures of the neighbouring countries. A believer in Arab descent in Sudan knows that his brother in the south is much closer to him than any Arab of another country, even if he is accustomed to look down on the former or to fight against him. An ideal usage of these cultures and their backgrounds during the transitional period might affect positively attitudes of people of the south (Agaw 1996: 5).

A proposed southern House of Nationalities provides a breath of fresh air in the debate. At a Swiss-sponsored seminar for southern intellectuals held in the Kenyan hills in November 2000, Professor Barri Ngagara Wanji put forward the idea of a forum "where all the nationalities found in the south Sudan could meet on a regular basis in order to discuss their problems" (Akol 2003: 20). This led to the idea of a House of Nationalities that could be advisory or legislative, address issues of gender in future governance and would aim above all to resolve conflict and foster peace among southern Sudanese (Akol 2003: 20). Subsequent discussions in Nairobi indicated some support from the SPLM for creating a legislative upper house along the lines of the House of Nationalities (SPLM 2003: 20).

Conclusion

The House of Nationalities as proposed is purely a southern initiative. But the benefits of such an approach could be just as useful in the north, as to date, political relations between north and south, Arabs and Africans, Muslims and Christians, have been characterised by fear and loathing.

Race and religion have been useful tools for creating cleavages in the Sudanese identity, an identity that in any case was a colonial invention. For many Sudanese, the first contact their ancestors had with either north or south came in the context of the slave trade. If one had been a buyer or user of other humans as slaves, arguably viewing these slaves as sub-human made the deal 'permissible.' If one had been enslaved, all the attributes of the slaver – their physical looks, characteristics and religious beliefs – could become repulsive.

But the bloodshed that has ensued, the continual abuse of human rights followed by denial of any problems by government and at times, the SPLM, really beggars belief.

Much of the bloodshed in recent years has focused on access to oil fields. Again, the government's scorched earth approach, their desire to get the oil out at all costs, fails to take into account the fact that they have been shelling out US $1 million a day to continue fighting the war. The government's inability to develop more inclusive policies and to construct more subtle ways of encouraging people to come to Islam, demonstrates lack of foresight and lack of imagination. It is also an indication the government receives poor advice and suffers from a serious lack of leadership.

In the international arena, the government's insistence on presenting Sudan as an Arab nation rather than focusing on its position as the largest country in Africa displays a cultural cringe of the highest degree. Sudan has a common religion with the Arab world and a common language, but surely it can take pride in its own unique and wonderful

cultural blend rather than desperately trying for acceptance as a second tier Arab nation. Sudan no longer needs Arab wealth, but there is no sign the government will shift position in this regard.

When it comes to religion, Turabi and the Islamists have missed the chance to give the world a modern interpretation of Islam that shows how Muslims can truly accommodate other faiths on an equal basis. The opportunity was there and certainly Turabi had the intellectual rigour, but the sheer racist nature of the society in which he lives appears to have made such developments both unnecessary and unwanted.

The SPLM has also failed to deliver on its promise of a New Sudan, at least in times of war, by failing to address concerns that it is dominated by the main southern tribe, the Dinka. What a simple trap to fall into and surely one that could have been avoided. There is a danger this could backfire further down the track during the initial peace period, when rumours designed to unseat the peace process are likely to abound. It will be easy for an agent provocateur to spread malicious gossip aimed at fostering problems between Nilotics and Equatorians. It will be far more difficult to counteract these stories once they are common parlance in the cities and villages of southern Sudan and in the north.

Muslim northerners need to ensure that they are part of the debate in the English language as well as in Arabic if they want to engage with the south. Southerners write overwhelmingly in English and in some senses, therefore, they tend to dominate the international discourse. On the other hand, the issue of English and Arabic pattern schools is vitally important and while southerners may understandably be keen to study in English, they should beware of rejecting the opportunity to gain superior Arabic skills.

Over and over again, ethnicity in Sudan has been a basis for rape, murder, torture, abduction and slavery. This is a brutal way to run a society and counter productive in the extreme. The pattern of past decades is now being played out yet again in Darfur.

CHAPTER FOUR

TERROR IN DARFUR

Introduction

It was in late 2003 that reports about the bloodshed in Darfur began appearing in the media. By mid-2004, interest in the area was reaching a fever pitch, with television screens everywhere filled with footage of women in vividly coloured *tobes*[18] struggling through whirling dust storms. The United Nations was forced to put pressure on the Sudanese government as aid workers faced delays for permits to visit the stricken area of western Sudan.

The uproar became a cacophony that was heard even in Khartoum, where state-owned Omdurman Television ran footage showing special police forces in their blue camouflage uniforms arriving in the area to restore law and order. Northern Sudanese in the capital bowed their heads in horror: this was a tragedy involving Muslim Sudanese, not those irrepressible people in the south. For any Sudanese steeped in a tradition of their culture as warm and hospitable, decent and God-fearing, Darfur poses a mental dilemma. "This is not part of our culture," lamented a Sudanese aid worker,[19] in other words: how can this be happening in my country, how can I live with this shame?

The trials and tribulations of Darfur have many similarities with the situation in the south and areas like the Nuba Mountains over past decades. The difference here is that unlike the people of the previously mentioned areas, the people of Darfur are overwhelmingly Muslims, albeit from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The other difference is that the television cameras have been able to get close enough to record the misery of the displaced.

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[18] Sudanese Muslim women wrap themselves sari-style in voluminous lengths of voile called *tobes*.
[19] Comment made to me in Kordofan, August 2004.

It is by looking at the history of the area and the way the bloody campaign has been conducted that it is finally very clear that the problems of Sudan centre around ethnic cleavages rather than religion alone. To understand what is happening in Darfur, we need to look back before the two civil wars, back before independence and the condominium, to the earliest recorded history of this interesting region.

History

Darfur means home or place of the Fur people. But in fact there are a number of 'dar' in the region, as this western part of Sudan borders Chad and Libya and is home to around seven million people of varying ethnic origins.

The region has three distinct ecological zones. The central region covers Jebel Marra (Marra Mountains), a beautiful and fertile area farmed by settled African tribes, including the Fur, Berti, Bargu, Nergid, Tama and Tunjur. The northern region is actually part of the Sahara desert and is home to camel-owning nomads, including the non-Arab Zayadia, Zaghawa and Bedeyat and the Arab Mahariya, Irayqat, Mahamid and Beni Hussein. Ecologically fragile, it is most vulnerable of the three areas to drought. The eastern and southern regions are less affected by drought and are home to nomadic cattle herders from the Rizeigat, Misseriya, Habbaniya, Beni Halba, Taaisha and Maaliyya. The area also has a large urban population, including traders, government officials and professionals (Ashworth 2005: 160, Verney et al 1995: 29).

Darfur was an independent Muslim sultanate, known variously as the Fur or Keira sultanate, from the fifteenth century until 1916, when it became part of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium (Lesch 1998: 18, Holt & Daly 1979: 36-37). Located between the Baggara[20] people in the south and the camel Arabs of the north, it was one of a number of non-Arab enclaves (Holt & Daly 1979: 7). "Although surrounded by a flood of immigrant Arab tribes, [the Fur] succeeded in establishing a dynastic Muslim state"

[20] Cattle nomads, from *baqar*, Arabic for cow.

(Holt & Daly 1979: 8). Lesch notes the Fur controlled major desert routes, intermingling for centuries with "migrants from West Africa, Arab traders and holy men from the Nile Valley and other indigenous peoples. Pride in their special history and culture remains strong among the Fur" (Lesch 1998: 18).

The sultanate was at its peak in the early 1800s under Abdel Rahman Al Rashid, described by the European traveller WG Browne as "a man rather under the middle size, of a complexion adust or dry, with eyes full of fire and features abounding in expression ... he possesses much alertness and activity" (cited in Holt & Daly 1979: 41). The sultanate made a permanent home east of Jebel Marra at El Fasher and Islam was well-embedded, with holy men granted land and providing religious teachers and clerks to the court (Holt & Daly 1979: 41).

At the fall of the Mahdist state in 1889, Ali Dinar became sultan, but relations deteriorated with the Condominium as he did not get assistance to defend his area against the French in the west. In 1916, the town of El Fasher was under threat from a force of around 3000 Sudan government troops positioned in neighbouring Kordofan province, supported by three aeroplanes (Holt & Daly 1979: 128). Despite the heat and lack of water, the troops advanced to within 12 miles of El Fasher, a battle ensued and the Fur withdrew, Ali Dinar escaped but was killed some months later. By 1919, the British had signed a border agreement with the French (Holt & Daly 1979: 128-9).

Nomadic herders continued armed raids on agricultural areas and skirmishes with rival groups, part of their way of life and "a survival strategy in the face of natural calamity and threatened destitution" (Verney et al 1995: 29). But as time went on, the attacks became more intense, shifting from small outbreaks in the 1950s to 1970s to large battles by the mid-1980s. Early clashes were between nomads over grazing rights and water access or animal theft (Verney et al 1995: 29).

In Darfur in the 1970s, a linguistic profile found that 55 per cent spoke Arabic, 21 per cent Fur and others spoke Masalit, Zaghawa and West African languages (Lesch 1998:

20). But the government attitude towards local languages was not encouraging, as this Sudanese-Australian from Darfur explains:

> I was born in [the seventies]. I grew up on the border with Chad, Sudan and Libya. I am Zaghawa, my mother and father speak different languages, it is a traditional culture and Arabic is not my first language. For my first three years at school, I was beaten more than 1000 times because I spoke my native language. That sort of discrimination made me feel I hated Arabs (Levy 2005).

Ashworth notes that nomads, semi-nomads and farmers had lived together in the era for a long time, settling localised disputes by traditional means (Ashworth 2005: 160). He argues it was not until the early 1980s that clashes began along ethnic lines (Ashworth 2005: 160). The area was hit hard by the drought of 1984-85 and thousands died of starvation. "The ecological devastation and its consequences for the population is one of the root causes of the current situation besides the ethnic factor and the political situation" (Ashworth 2005: 160).

The drought also forced some Zaghawa nomads into urban centres where they worked as petty traders. Those who remained in rural areas received a hostile reception from Fur farmers and they were also accused of camel rustling by the military (Verney 1995: 30). The Zaghawa were made unwelcome by Fur in local government and the police and army burned Zaghawa settlements and executed Zaghawa leaders (Verney et al 1995: 30). In what could be classed as a forerunner of the current conflict, Verney notes:

> The element of racial prejudice became further entwined with the environmental roots of the conflict with the formation of an alliance of 27 Arab nomad tribes and their declaration of war against the Zurug (black) and non-Arab groups of Darfur. The response of the Fur was to form their own militias, at first for self defence and later as part of a short-lived but significant linkage with the SPLA (Verney et al 1995: 30).

The area was an Umma Party stronghold and Umma leader Sadiq Al Mahdi began arming Arab groups in Darfur and Kordofan, mainly Baggara and Rizeigat, to fight the southerners around 1987. "More arms came into the region as a fall-out of the war in Chad in the late 1980s. Illicit arms trade from the Central African Republic, Libya and southern Sudan added to the problem" (Ashworth 2005: 160).

With the change of government in 1989, the NIF wanted to "silence and remove civilians of African heritage from the zones just north of the southern provinces ... a cordon sanitaire to protect the cultural and religious purity" (Lesch 1998: 161). Official fatwas claimed any Muslim fighting the regime was guilty of apostasy and also legitimised attacks on Nuba, Ingessana and Fur peoples (Lesch 1998: 162).

But even before President Bashir took power, in 1988 two Darfurian NIF politicians had defected from the party, accusing the leadership of racism. One was Daud Bolad, an NIF member since his student days and a former coordinator in Darfur. First joining the Democratic Unionist Party, Bolad subsequently jumped ship to the SPLA, accusing the NIF of Arabism (De Waal 2004: 98). By December 1991, Bolad was heading a small SPLA group in Darfur, but the unit was defeated and Bolad disappeared after being captured by Darfur Governor, Colonel Tayeb Ibrahim, also known as *sikha* (iron bar). Ironically, Tayeb had been Bolad's former bodyguard in his student days with the NIF (De Waal 2004: 98).

Meanwhile, the Sudanese government signed an integration treaty with Libya in 1990 that promoted Arabic language and culture in Darfur; later that year, at least 90 Fur chiefs were arrested for trying to stop attacks on their villages by government-supported Arab militia (Lesch 1998: 162). Reports continued through the decade of armed militias known as *Janjaweed* (men on horses) raiding villages of African tribes in Darfur and thousands of villagers fled into Chad (Ashworth 2005: 160).

Ashworth notes that Darfur, like everywhere in Sudan except for Khartoum and the agricultural Gezira region, is politically marginalised and severely underdeveloped: "There is a lack of infrastructure, lack of investment in both physical and human resources, absence of basic services, rare employment opportunities and the proliferation of small arms are characteristics of this situation" (Ashworth 2005: 160).

Administrative reorganisation in 1994 appears to have increased ethnic tensions. Human Rights Watch notes that the move by President Bashir "gave members of Arab ethnic groups new positions of power, which the Masalit, like their Fur and Zaghawa neighbours, saw as attempt to undermine their traditional leadership role and the power of their communities in their homeland" (Human Rights Watch May 2004: 6).

Allegiance to Islam

The Darfurians have a strong connection with their area and are proud of their rich heritage, including their early allegiance to Islam. "We are Muslim more than the Arabs, Islam in Darfur is earlier than [anywhere in Sudan]" – commented a Sudanese-Australian from Darfur (Levy 2005).

But Muslim traditions in Darfur may owe more to West Africa than the Nile Valley, there is a large Muslim West African population known as Fellata, who have Hausa and Fulani origins (De Waal 2004: 77-78).

> These black, non-Arab Darfurians and Fellata Muslims emerged as a significant Islamist constituency in the 1980s and 90s and their Islamist orthodoxy was a challenge to implicit assumption of the Nile Valley Islamists that Islamism is coterminous with Arabism (De Waal 2004: 77-78).

The ruling Fur and Fulani families claim descent from the prophet and those with Islamist leanings had little quarrel with Turabi's Islamic project (De Waal 2004: 77-78). However, Lesch notes that in Sudan, "people who have virtually no Arab blood call themselves Arab by virtue of an adopted lineage that they trace symbolically to the Prophet or to important Arab dynasties and tribes" (Lesch 1998: 211). In this way, people may acquire a perceived elevated social status.

The racial divide between "riverain Arabs and western blacks" in the NIF was highlighted in the 1999 split between Bashir and Turabi (De Waal 2004: 77-78). De Waal argues:

> The critique of the westerners was framed entirely in terms of the riverain elite's monopoly on power, making no reference to any Islamic precepts. The racial aspect of the encounter between 'Arab' and 'African' Islamisms remains untheorised, both in the parties' embrace and in their dissension. Indeed, Islamists *cannot* theorise this encounter, because they do not recognise any plurality in Islam or Islamism, instead insisting that in any disagreement, one party must be deviating from true Islam (De Waal 2004: 78).

Two types of conflict

The conflicts that arose in Darfur in 2003 had been bubbling under the surface for many years, ignored and at times inflamed by the central government with its policy of arming Arab tribesmen. The International Crisis Group (ICG) argues there had been two distinct types of conflict: sporadic, traditional conflicts over resources that exhibited a low level of violence and the ethnically driven clashes that emerged in the late 1980s (ICG March 2004: 5). These conflicts were especially fierce and additional parties began to be drawn in, "fighters began identifying themselves more broadly as Arab or non-Arab for the first time in the 1987-1989 conflict between the Fur and the Arabs" (ICG March 2004: 5).

The ICG argues the government had been arming Arab tribes in central and northern Sudan since the 1980s, to destabilise the SPLA and ensure the southern rebellion would not spread (ICG March 2004:5). The tactic had worked in the south, where regional, tribal and political divisions were exploited to create southern militia to secure the oilfields and fight the SPLA. Ashworth says that low level conflict continued until 2003, when "a number of interacting factors, including ethnic conflict, an increase in armed robberies and a perception of Darfur marginalisation, led to the formation of two political and military resistance movements, the Sudanese Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equity Movement (JEM)" (Ashworth 2005: 160).

While these movements have made political demands, the government has called them bandits and ignored their political agenda (Ashworth 2005: 160). It is all depressingly familiar – when the SPLA first began attacking government posts in the mid-1980s, the government news agency SUNA would also refer to army operations that had successfully "mopped up bandits."

The government has repeatedly been accused of rallying the *Janjaweed* to quash the SLM and the JEM after they attacked military targets in 2003 (Associated Press October 21, 2004). BBC reporter in Khartoum, Alfred Taban, says that "the number of Janjaweed is reported to be very small, maybe a few thousand, but they are well armed with automatic weapons and ride well-fed horses and camels" (BBC April 10, 2004). It is believed that many of the men received military training in Libya in the 1980s, as part of Gaddafi's Islamic Legion of north and west African mercenaries (BBC April 10, 2004).

Khartoum denies involvement; however Arab militia leaders, including the prominent Musa Hilal, maintains that the government "asked Arab tribes to help combat the rebels," while US and UN officials "point to alleged coordination by Sudan's military and the Arab militia" (Associated Press October 21, 2004). There are widespread reports of Sudan Air Force planes bombing or harassing non-Arab villages as part of an orchestrated campaign in conjunction with army and militia raids.

Human Rights Watch reports that villages are generally targeted on the basis of ethnicity, with Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit villages burned while nearby hamlets belonging to other tribes remain untouched. "The intact villages sometimes belong to Arab and other non-Zaghawa, non-Masalit or non-Fur African ethnic groups" (Human Rights Watch April 2004: 22).

Both rebel groups say they want more power and resources for Darfur. The SLM is believed to be the larger of the two rebel groups, consisting mainly of the nomadic, African Zaghawa tribe, while the JEM is linked to Hassan Al Turabi; the US estimates that the latter has around 1000 fighters (Associated Press October 21, 2004).

The ICG has noted that Turabi's Popular National Congress distributed *The Black Book*, a pamphlet claiming the ruling party was blocking Darfurians and minority groups from holding senior public servant positions. It listed senior officials by rank, ethnicity and region, stating party members from riverain northern Sudan, particularly Shaigiya and

Jaaliyin Arabs, were favoured (ICG June 25, 2003: 12). "These charges risked introducing ethnicity as a more powerful factor in northern Sudanese politics than ever before, while giving Western governments and disaffected minority groups a new card against the Islamists" (ICG June 25, 2003: 12). Adding fuel to the fire of the theme of Turabi's links with the JEM and support for a new non-Arab thrust, Human Rights Watch reports that a rumour was circulating with the "new-found 'fact' that Turabi is not really an Arab" (Human Rights Watch April 2004: 11).

World's worst humanitarian crisis

In the meantime, the scorched earth policy and harassment campaign has destroyed at least 400 villages, killed 70,000 people or more and sent more than one million people scurrying around the region in search of sanctuary. This includes around 200,000 people who have sought refuge in hastily thrown together camps in neighbouring Chad (Associated Press October 21, 2004). The stories of rape, murder, pillage and plunder, branding of women, torching of homes and grain have poured out of the region along with its former inhabitants.

The vast majority of the dead are black Africans (BBC November 14, 2004). But militia leader Musa Hilal says deaths in the region are simply repercussions of war. "The rebels started this war. They started burning and destroying many of the villages. They started destroying our villages first," he said (BBC November 14, 2004).

Human Rights Watch notes the Darfur conflict has deep roots, but says there are key differences with prior bouts of fighting:

> The current conflict has developed serious racial and ethnic overtones and clearly risks shattering historic if fragile patterns of coexistence. A number of ethnic groups previously neutral are now positioning themselves along the Arab/African divide, aligning and cooperating with either the rebel movements or the government and its allied militia. Remaining neutral and outside the conflict is becoming impossible (Human Rights Watch April 2004: 8).

But Sudan's Foreign Minister Dr Mustafa Osman Ismail has denied links between the government and the Janjaweed, simply saying "you have no evidence" (BBC, November 14, 2004).

Africa Confidential newsletter maintains that the government is employing a NIF technique honed in the south and the Nuba Mountains, using proxy militias to do its dirty work and at the same time, inflaming local grievances (Africa Confidential November 19, 2004: 6). "Darfur's Janjaweed killers are a prime example: Khartoum's line that it can't control them is still parroted by governments, despite ample evidence to the contrary, including from cautious UN investigators" (Africa Confidential November 19, 2004: 6). The newsletter also notes that UN officials mention, sotto voce, that the area could disintegrate into a Somali-style warlord zone, failing to notice "that the emphasis on Somalia and on regional disintegration are both propaganda lines put out for months by the regime itself" (Africa Confidential November 19, 2004: 6).

While most of the displaced are from African tribes, "it would be wrong to assume that it is always Arabs who are the victors and Africans the vanquished," says Greg Barrow from the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) (Barrow 2004). He notes that:

> There are also displaced Arab communities, whose villages were attacked by African groups and who are victims of inter-African fighting. There are even parts of South Darfur where the WFP currently cannot work because of a dangerous traditional conflict between rival Arab groups (Barrow 2004)

International uproar

The United Nations now calls the situation in Darfur the world's worst [man-made] humanitarian crisis. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has visited the area, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and then US Secretary of State Colin Powell have dropped in, along with leaders and foreign ministers of a host of countries and numerous aid agency heads. Along with the visitors, a forest of reports has been produced, each one outlining in ever more ghastly detail the terrible crimes of the government-backed militia, the *Janjaweed*, and armed groups in the area in general.

In July 2004, after months of international inaction, the United Nations Security Council demanded that Sudan move to disarm Darfur militias and provide a progress report within 30 days (UN Security Council July 30, 2004). By September 2004, the Security Council declared its intention to consider sanctions to get Sudan to comply with its security and disarmament obligations for Darfur (UN Security Council September 9, 2004). The push was sponsored by the United States, Germany, Romania and Britain, with the US representative declaring the situation in Darfur uniquely grave and the largest humanitarian disaster in the world. He added:

> The text [of the resolution] reflects the wishes of delegations to recognise that the [Sudanese] government had met some of its obligations. But nobody should be under the illusion that the government had done so voluntarily ... It had done so with great reluctance and long delays, under significant pressure from the international community (UN Security Council September 9, 2004).

There has been considerable debate as to whether or not the situation qualifies as genocide – the United States thinks it is genocide, but a report from a UN Commission of Inquiry does not agree, freeing member states from an obligation to take immediate action to end the bloodshed. However, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that the commission's report established that the Sudanese government and the *Janjaweed* are responsible for crimes under international law; attacks on villages, killing of civilians, rape, pillaging and forced displacement continued even as the inquiry was underway (Annan February 1, 2005). The commission also gave the secretary-general a sealed file containing the names of those responsible and urged the Security Council to refer the matter to the International Criminal Court in The Hague (Annan February 1, 2005, BBC February 1, 2005).

Back on the ground, Amnesty notes that security officials harass Darfurians on suspicion they are linked to the rebel groups, while camps for internally displaced people located around Khartoum are raided and people from Darfur arrested. "There seems to be no reason for their arrests other than their area of origin" (Amnesty December 2004: 15). For those brave enough to complain to the authorities, worse fates await. When one man

in Darfur sought justice after his brother was executed by the armed forces, the police told him to go to the army, which he did, both groups asked him for large sums of money, he was detained by the army for 12 days, tied up and hung in a tree and beaten five times a day, and finally released after another brother bribed someone from military intelligence (Amnesty December 2004: 8).

Peace talks hosted in Abuja, Nigeria, by the African Union (AU) continue despite many difficulties. An under-resourced team of several thousand AU peace monitors struggles on, unarmed and without sufficient vehicles, helicopters or communications equipment to do their job to the fullest extent. Nevertheless, AU monitors say there is no doubt the *Janjaweed* is doing the government's bidding in western Sudan and it is mere semantics "to quibble over whether these fighters are regular military or irregular militia" (Segupta 2004).

The role of the AU monitors in Darfur has come under scrutiny, especially when compared with an Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) [21] backed ceasefire monitoring force in the Nuba Mountains, which Taban notes provides timely reports apportioning blame.

> The African Union, under whose auspices these monitors are operating, should revisit this issue and ensure that the whole world is told when, where and how the ceasefire in Darfur is being violated and who is responsible. It should also work out a system of reward for the side which is complying and of punishment for violators (Taban 2004: 2).

Government attempts to bring human rights abusers, in particular, the *Janjaweed*, to justice have been condemned as a lot of hot air. Human Rights Watch notes that government committees and commissions often take no action except to produce secret and soon-forgotten reports (Human Rights Watch November 2004: 21-22).

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[21] IGAD has sponsored the main peace talks between government and SPLM. As part of an earlier ceasefire agreement for the Nuba Mountains area, they fund an unarmed international group of (mostly) ex-military observers who follow up reports of ceasefire violations, make public reports and also coordinate de-mining programs in the area.

Meanwhile, the Sudan Embassy in Washington has become weary of reports from Darfur by the Washington Post correspondent Emily Wax:

> Heartbreaking pictures illustrating Ms Wax's articles unfortunately reflect all too normal living situations in many parts of Africa due to international sanctions or huge foreign debt burdens. Worse, by seeming to embrace the cause of armed insurgencies, the Post plays a dangerous game that encourages those working to destroy fledgling nation-states through anarchic terror. These are not freedom fighters, but ruthless insurgents who stop at nothing to achieve their ambitions (Embassy of Sudan 2004).

Numerous sources link the SPLA to the early days of the SLA, asserts the ICG. It maintains the SPLA provided arms, training and strategic advice to the SLA at the onset of the rebellion, training "as many as 1500 Darfurians near Raja in western Bahr Al Ghazal in March 2002" (ICG March 25, 2004: 20). Supplies are believed to be sent via Chad, although there are persistent reports of flights out of Nairobi and Uganda (ICG March 25, 2004: 20).

Crawford believes that the United Nations Security Council won't authorise intervention – even an African Union-led intervention – without Khartoum's agreement, noting the UN has baulked at putting an embargo on Sudan's oil export, "the only economic act that would have compelled Sudan's government to cease its genocidal offensive and allow in foreign peace keepers" (Crawford 2004: 12). Crawford supports an international intervention force, rather than just the African Union and he wants the force to have the power to make peace, not merely to keep it (Crawford 2004: 12).

> An international component will be essential, not just for logistics or specialist communications and airlift, but for providing the peacemaking force element. And being international will not make it any more provocative - after all, in Darfur being African is not neutral: it is enough to get you murdered. We must be clear about this: effectiveness requires a significant UK and/or US component (Crawford 2004: 12).

But while foreign intervention may resolve short term conflicts in the country, including ending the killing and suffering of innocent people in Darfur, it will not address the longer-term issues of governance. The government could also consider softening its

media image as another way of demonstrating its concern. In an opinion piece in *Khartoum Monitor*, Mohamed Osman asks:

> Have you seen any picture of a Sudanese official sitting on the ground inside a displaced person's camp in Darfur? Did you see any Sudanese official or politician visiting the camp and holding or embracing an old lady in any of those camps? Of course, you have seen Kofi Annan coming to the Sudan? What did he do, he sat on the ground with the displaced persons and talked with them (Osman 2004: 3).

The government could encourage state-run Omdurman Television to broadcast pictures of compassionate officials caring for the Darfur displaced rather than endless footage of police in blue camouflage uniforms jumping out of pickups with guns at the ready.

In January 2005, yet another Human Rights Watch report detailed the crimes committed by the Sudanese government in concert with the *Janjaweed.* "Regardless of whether there has been genocide, the scale and severity of the ongoing atrocities in Darfur demand an urgent international response," said Peter Takirambudde, Human Rights Watch Africa Director (Human Rights Watch January 24, 2005).

All of this took place against the backdrop of peace talks in Naivasha between the government and the SPLM, with the hope expressed that the main peace agreement will assist in finding a resolution to the Darfur crisis.

Conclusion

The UN's failure to call the violence in Darfur genocide has enraged some US politicians who have called for UN Secretary-General Annan to sort out the mess or stand down (Agence France Presse Washington: February 1, 2005). However Annan has said that sanctions are still on the table and the Security Council may have to take further action (Associated Press February 2, 2005).

Now a further debate has arisen over the most suitable place for hearings about the Darfur crimes. While the US wants to see a UN and AU tribunal established in Arusha,

Tanzania. The UN and countries such as Canada want the case to be heard by the already-established International Criminal Court in The Hague (Agence France Presse Ottawa: February 1, 2005, Washington February 1, 2005). However the debate is somewhat artificial as Sudan's first vice president, Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, insists that "the government is opposed to trying any Sudanese official or ordinary citizen involved in the Darfur incidents outside the Sudan" (Agence France Presse February 5, 2005).

In the diaspora, Sudanese watch the news bulletins and wonder about the future. Says a Sudanese-Australian from Darfur: "I am Muslim more than them but we don't care about religion, we care about rights" (Levy 2005). However it is clear that in today's Sudan, being a Muslim is not enough to ensure equality as a Sudanese citizen, not enough to ensure government support if your village is attacked and your family harassed and even killed.

Once again, the pattern of escalation of conflict here is clear. Low level tribal differences over water and grazing land may fester for years, contained by cautious local leaders and community restraint. But add plentiful supplies of modern weapons and manipulative and rumour-mongering officials who are prepared to foster ethnic differences to divide and rule, and it is possible to create bloodshed for our times and bitterness that may not subside for generations.

The scorched earth policies carried out by the *Janjaweed* have another agenda - to disperse people from their land. Again, this is the same situation as we have found in the south where people have been forced to flee their homes in the oil areas. Government-backed militia, manipulated along ethnic lines, displaces the local population who are forced to flee for their safety.

The international uproar over the situation in Darfur has reached a peak unlike any concern shown over the conflict in the south. The world community, through the UN,

has made it clear the *Janjaweed*'s activities – and their backing from the government – are intolerable.

But as an international watchdog, the UN Security Council lacks teeth and fails to step in to prevent atrocities, even when it is clear what is happening. Despite all the warnings, we have been witnessing another Rwanda, of sorts, and a repeat of the last 20 years in the Nuba Mountains and in the south. As all parties to the conflict are Sudanese Muslims, this time there can be no doubt that it is racism at play, rather than religion.

CHAPTER FIVE

BEYOND NAIVASHA

Peace in our time

On January 9, 2005, the Sudanese government and the SPLM signed a long-awaited, comprehensive peace agreement that covered a number of issues that are referred to as the protocols. The ceremony, at State House in Nairobi, was witnessed by heads of government from Kenya, South Africa and many other foreign dignitaries.

Final consensus had been reached on six main protocols on December 31, 2004, at Lake Naivasha, the beautiful Kenyan venue that had been the site for peace talks for the past few years. The protocols covered self determination for the south, power sharing, administration arrangements for the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile, and for the oil-rich Abyei area, arrangements for sharing wealth - especially some 300,000 barrels a day of oil - and security details such as coordination and salaries for the two defence forces (Garang: January 1, 2005, Agence France Presse: December 30, 2004).

By late February 2005, Sudan is expected to form a government of national unity with decentralised administration. The SPLM will set up a semi-autonomous government of South Sudan, probably in the southern town of Rumbek As part of the power-sharing agreement, first vice president and government peace broker, Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, must stand down in favour of SPLM leader John Garang de Mabior, who will become both national first vice president and head of the government of Southern Sudan. An SPLM appointee will replace the current foreign minister (Agence France Presse, December 30, 2004).

General elections must be held at the end of the third year and after six years, the south will vote on whether to secede or stay part of Sudan (Agence France Presse, December

30, 2004). Many observers expect a referendum to support secession, but it is also clear the government opposes the break up of the country. In Ashworth's view, southerners are very unlikely ever to see an independent southern state: "If a referendum ever takes place, if the government of Sudan has not succeeded in manipulating the electorate and rigging the ballot to guarantee victory, if the southerners vote for secession ... will they get it? The answer is probably not" (Ashworth 2004: 186). He argues that the African Union and Arab League nations, among others, would support the government's calls for territorial integrity "to be maintained at any cost" (Ashworth 2004:186).

Nevertheless, the agreement provides that after three years, the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile will elect their own government - until that date, a governor from the SPLM or Khartoum will rotate through the post. Abyei will have special status and people will be dual citizens of both Western Kordofan in the north and Bahr Al Ghazal in the south, with a referendum in six years to see where their permanent future lies (Agence France Presse, December 30, 2004).

The official languages will be Arabic and English. In the public service, 30 per cent of jobs will be reserved for people from the south. The majority of the oil wealth will be split equally between the national and southern governments, with two per cent remaining in the area where the oil is sourced. There will be a new national currency with a design reflecting Sudan's diversity, although whether the name of the currency will revert to the former 'pound' from its current 'dinar'[22] is unclear. A dual banking system will include a non-interest charging Islamic system in the north and a conventional system in the south (Agence France Presse, December 30, 2004).

Government and SPLA forces will remain separate entities but will have equal status as Sudan's National Armed Forces, coordinated by a new Joint Defence Board comprising top officers from either side. More than 100,000 government troops in the south and

[22] Most Sudanese shops still calculate in pounds rather than the official dinars. If an item costs 2 dinars, it will be quoted at 200, meaning 200 pounds. The currency itself is labelled as dinars, so it is confusing for visitors.

SPLA fighters in the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile will be withdrawn under international monitoring arrangements.

When peace breaks out

Although it had been 21 years in the making - or perhaps because of the longevity of the civil war – the agreement appears to have left people in a kind of shock, uncertain about what will happen next. When war has become normal, what do you do when faced with peace? Others argue that it cannot be called peace when the blood continues to flow in Darfur.

When peace 'broke out,' southerners danced in the streets of Khartoum, while President Bashir visited Juba and spoke to the crowd wrapped in a southerner's *lau* wrapper[23] instead of military uniform, a safari suit or northern *jellabiya*. But somehow, he seemed uneasy draped in the white cloth, his belly circled with an unhemmed green sash that appeared to have been hastily added as a nod to Islam's green and white colours.

The news wires are buzzing with stories about the temporary southern capital of Rumbek, how satellite dishes and mobile phones are arriving as construction starts. In Uganda, long-term refugees wonder about the facilities in their homelands - should they take the chance and move now, or wait a little in the camps, where at least they have food, shelter and education, and see how things develop.

In Khartoum, people are nervous – their situation has improved over the years, will the southerners come and take everything for nothing?[24] Already, the SPLM has established offices in Khartoum, one in a building in the very street used by President Bashir when he travels to the People's Assembly, another in Haj Yousif, an area that is home to many southerners. Ashworth argues that "the main problem for most northerners has never

[23] Lau – material tied over the shoulder and left to fall to the ground, worn by both men and women in the south.
[24] From views expressed to me by a number of northern professionals, Khartoum 2004.

been the war in the south; rather it is living in a dictatorship which imposes its own version of Islam on them" (Ashworth 2004: 187).

Martin notes that "Bashir has proven to be far more resilient than anyone expected. Slowly his government has worked itself out of its pariah status and back from the brink of economic collapse" (Martin 2002: 2). In central Khartoum, public transport, telephones, electricity and water utilities are in much better order than a decade ago, while regional towns such as Kadugli, Juba and Malakal are connected to the mobile phone network.

Fear of the unknown

But the discrimination, distrust and fear that have dogged the Sudanese for so many years will not disappear with the stroke of a pen on a peace agreement. There is deep anxiety about the outcome of this war, deep seated fear from the north that the southerners will take jobs and resources previously only available to northerners, from the south that the north will attempt to subjugate them yet again. With the possibility of secession in the offing, how serious are these disparate groups about learning to cooperate and live together harmoniously?

To a large extent, what we have seen to date in Sudan is outlined by Rothchild, who says:

> Ethnic and political minorities fear the consequences of a fundamental reorganisation of the regime (for example, the creation of an Islamic state in Sudan) and where they remain deeply anxious over their subordination or their cultural or physical survival, inter-group conflicts are likely to be intense and in some cases, highly destructive of lives and property (Rothchild 1997: 28).

Johnson notes that although the SPLM stated from the outset that the war was not about "a southern problem, but about the distribution of power in the country," the government successfully confined the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development talks to southern grievances (Johnson 2003: 10). He says other opposition groups have been absent from Naivasha, arguing "the rest of the country cannot be so easily sidelined and

sooner or later the broader constitutional issues are going to intrude" (Johnson 2003: 10). Further, he observes that Abyei, Southern Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains are not part of the old south and may not aspire to inclusion in an independent southern Sudan (Johnson 2003: 10).

Democracy in African states often means that the largest ethnic group takes power, argues Deng (Deng 1998: 11-12). It will be a struggle for the SPLM to ensure it appears inclusive of all groups and is not just for Dinka and other Nilotic groups. To date, the SPLM's rhetoric of a New Sudan that provides equal resources and opportunities for people from all backgrounds has not been developed beyond talk. It is inevitable that in the coming years, new parties promoting the cause of other areas such as Equatoria will come forward and the SPLM must be prepared to work with these groups rather than seeing them as usurpers of power. The National Democratic Alliance, a coalition of opposition groups operating outside Sudan, has been seen as SPLM-dominated. Perhaps that's the nature of being the group with the guns, but nevertheless, groups such as Beja Congress in the east may not appreciate being seen as poor second cousins to the SPLM in government. Peace provides a second chance for the SPLM to lead the way in developing an inclusive style of governance, but it is too early to determine if they will respond positively to this challenge.

Lesch argues that

> Normal interethnic competition for political posts, educational benefits and a stake in the economy is distorted by the unequal power relations and the ideological pressure from the centre. The more the government in the north seeks to Arabise and Islamise the country, the more African peoples react against that pressure and deepen their counter-identities (Lesch 1998: 213).

Trying to persuade African non-Muslims that they are really part of the Arab and Islamic world only serves to set people at each other's throats. Likewise, arming neighbouring groups such as Nuer and Dinka, Dinka and Baggara, Rizeigat and Dinka, then inflaming tensions so they inevitably fight, is one of the most perverse ways one can imagine for a

government to deal with its citizens. Entire villages have been destroyed by this process – and to what end?

Burying the hatchet

For many of those who have spent years fighting, or who have lost family and friends or had their own lives disrupted beyond belief, there may be little inclination to bury the hatchet. Peterson notes that many of the Lost Boys[25] subsequently chose to return to their homeland to fight: "A Catholic priest who accompanied the boys for much of the journey to Kenya explained a new frustration: 'Many want to go back and fight. They have seen their mothers and fathers killed and there is a lot of hatred among them'." (Peterson 2000: 243)

Even in the diaspora, northerners and southerners may socialise separately, as Sudanese in Australia explained:

> It looks like we came to a multicultural country, but we still don't work together. Until now, we have different community associations. We tried to bring the Arabs in but it didn't work. Most were Muslim, but we don't want to hear *Bismillah Abdel Rahman* or prayers. The northerners feel second class here, but the southerners – they still consider we should be behind them – D, a Sudanese-Australian from the south (Levy 2004)

> The war is part of what is keeping us separate – we cannot have barbecues with the people whose brothers are killing our mothers – J, a Sudanese-Australian from the south (Levy 2004).

Choosing and accepting a leader was also a problem among such disparate groups, said S, a Sudanese-Australian from the north. In the case of South Africa, other tribes agreed on Nelson Mandela, but S asserted Sudanese cannot agree on a leader. "Even the big parties like Umma, are not a party of ideas, but a party of big families. In Darfur, people are half with the government, half with the revolution." (Levy 2005).

[25] A group of around 12,000 unaccompanied minors/child soldiers, the Lost Boys travelled from Sudan to Ethiopia and back again, journeying 1000 miles over six years in atrocious conditions.

Don't forget Darfur

The conflict goes on in Darfur as debate continues over the relative merits of trying Sudanese war criminals in the International Criminal Court in The Hague or a yet-to-be-established tribunal in Tanzania. Debate also continues over reports of atrocities, with the Sudanese government flatly denying reports from non government organisations that Sudanese Antonov planes bombed Darfur villages in January, killing more than 100 people (Associated Press January 26, 2005; Associated Press February 1, 2005).

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has laid out a plan for a 10,000-strong peacekeeping mission to monitor the end of the war with the south and says the mission would also deploy observers to Darfur to work closely with African Union monitors (Associated Press February 4, 2005).

But peace talks in Abuja dealing with Darfur must find a recipe for ethnic balance for "any region in Sudan still affected by the discriminating politics of Arab and Islamisation supremacy," argues Pastor Enoch Mikaya Muktar (Muktar, August 28, 2004: 3). He says that one only needs to look at the school curricula or national television to see the imbalance. Non-Arab ethnic groups appear only to perform traditional dances, "as if the only thing God created them to do is dance" (Muktar, August 28, 2004: 3).

> It's time for coexistence among the ethnicities of Darfur, so that a Darfurian of an African ethnic group can look at the face of an Arab today without any disgusting feelings if he knows some of his family members are victims of Arab militiamen (Muktar, August 28, 2004: 3).

Deng notes that the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement heralded a golden period for Sudan, in which cultural diversity began to be celebrated:

> Whether the country will once again be able to achieve, retain and improve on that golden period will depend on the prospects for a just resolution to the north-south conflict, which has proliferated and is now spreading to other marginalised non-Arab regions of the north (Deng 1995: 384).

Given that the flames of war have been fanned by racism and fuelled by religion, it will require concerted and structured effort by the government and by religious bodies to try to turn the situation around. The Darfur situation must be resolved and the needs of other groups, such as the Beja in eastern Sudan, who clashed with police in Port Sudan (BBC January 29, 2005) in late January, 2005, must be addressed.

Hope lies with the people

Ashworth asserts that hope lies with the people, rather than with political leadership, which he argues is "largely discredited and holds little moral authority" (Ashworth 2004: 188). But Sudanese in the diaspora believe it will take a lot to get people to change long-held feelings about each other:

> I cannot imagine the northerners changing overnight to behave like good boys all of a sudden and the southerners would not accept anything less than the feeling of ownership of the country. Based on all the things we've touched on today, Sudan has been divided already. The onus is on the northerners: show us why it is necessary for Sudan to be one - J, a Sudanese-Australian from the south (Levy 2004).

Ashworth continues that civil society must be fostered so it can "play a greater part not only in the peace processes but also in the governance of the country" (Ashworth 2004: 188). A leaf could be taken out of South Africa's book, where inclusivity and transparency are seen as essential (Ashworth 2004: 188).

However, the situation is different to that of South Africa, where there was a revered leader and elections finally brought him and his party to power. In Sudan, many southerners are expecting to have a separate country after the referendum in six years time. They are not looking to achieve rapprochement with the north, they believe the battle has been won and it is time to divide the spoils. Although many have been living in SPLM-controlled areas, they are not necessarily all strong supporters of Garang and may well be disillusioned with leaders as Ashworth indicates above.

Many of the people who return to Sudan will have spent large periods of time living in refugee camps. Although conditions in camps are tough, facilities in established camps may still be better than what is available in Sudan. People would be deluded if they expect the international community will pick up the bill for development work in the same way they funded 20 years of emergency humanitarian assistance. Aid funds in fact are likely to be diverted to other emergencies, with the Boxing Day tsunami a case in point.

However, there are a number of initiatives that could assist in promoting reconciliation and peace in Sudan. Australia's efforts in recent years to promote the country's multicultural identity could provide a useful guide. A government-supported multicultural foundation could develop programs for people of all backgrounds and ages to raise awareness and foster peace. This could play an extremely positive role in bringing rapprochement at the grassroots level. Similarly, the media has a vital role to play in ensuring rumours are debunked and positive stories get a run.

Otherwise, in six years, or even sooner, this bloody mess could start up again. Whatever the differences, whatever the background, colour or religion, there are surely better ways to sort them out than through yet another double-decade war.

Conclusion

This sub-thesis has looked at Sudan - an ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse country that was thrown together in one large national melting pot by its colonial masters. The turmoil that has ensued has effectively prevented Sudan from playing a significant role in regional or international arenas.

From the beginning, there were tensions between north and south, between Arabs and Africans, between Muslims, Christians and people with traditional beliefs. Echoes of the slave trade reverberated throughout their dealings, British attitudes cemented the sub-

national cleavages, ensuring that they not only did not like each other, they also feared each other and could not work together.

Sudan may the largest country in Africa, but the darker one's skin, the smaller one's chance of having a good education, good job and ability to express religious and cultural values. The Arab Muslims from the northern riverain have traditionally had the upper hand and access to the most resources. Northern Sudanese as a group regard themselves as "The Sudanese" and everyone else as "The Others."

A succession of poor leaders, both civilian and military, has failed to inspire the population to rise above their prejudices in the style of a Mandela or a Gandhi. Instead, even those who showed some promise at times, such as Nimeiri during his early peace-making period, eventually moved down the Islamist path. There has been a complete inability of the part of Northern Muslim leaders to shape a brighter future for the nation by demonstrating the ability of Islam in Sudan to create peace and accommodate other beliefs. Bashir and Turabi are both educated men, yet they have failed to develop plans to bring the country together, instead adopting militant positions that show a lack of faith in the rightness of their Islamist cause and a complete lack of vision when it comes to governing the country.

The verdict on the leadership of SPLM chair John Garang may still be out. While he has put forward a vision for a New Sudan, his leadership style has also been under fire from people inside and outside the movement and it remains to be seen whether he will take a more inclusive approach as head of the government of South Sudan and as national first vice president. Clearly the opportunity is there, if he wants to take it.

To study the history of Sudan, both before and after independence, is to trawl through some of the most disgusting examples of human rights abuse that can be found anywhere. Slavery, torture, child soldiers, massacres, burning of houses, incarceration, beatings – the list is endless. The legacy of psychological traumas will affect family and society relationships for years to come.

The prospects for reconciliation are dim. All the indications are that the south is ready to separate. Much of the Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile and Abyei area may also want to distance themselves from Khartoum. Culturally, physically, economically, the African parts of Sudan have been insulted by the ruling elite one too many times.

Just a few hours by plane from Sudan there are countries where it is considered normal to be black and African, where advertising billboards show smiling African faces, where dress styles are modest but relaxed, alcohol is available and men and women work together and play together without fear of retribution. Many southerners have been enjoying this lifestyle in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia while they have been in exile – they may return to Sudan, but they won't be giving up that African way of life.

And there will be Sudanese from the north who will return to Khartoum in the wake of the peace agreement, Muslim Sudanese who found it difficult to work and dangerous to express their political opinions in years gone by. They've been living in African countries, but also in Egypt, Europe, the United States and Australia. They remember a Sudan where *sharia* was a respected part of the legal process, but not seen as the repository for the main body of the country's law.

There is one clear indication the north – or at least Bashir – continues to view the south, the non-Muslim Sudanese, as unequal partners. At a gathering at Suki in central Sudan on February 9, President Bashir told the crowd that Islam would continue to be the main source of legislation in Sudan, despite the peace deal. AFP reports that Bashir told the crowd Sudan's former leaders paid only lip service to *sharia*, comparing his government to the Mahdist revolution, which Bashir said "raised the banner of Islam and implemented its code in public life" (AFP February 9, 2005).

In my view, the next few years will see great development in the Sudan, particularly in the south which has lagged behind for so long. I believe it is also inevitable there will be

sporadic outbreaks of fighting in rural areas between ethnic groups, some of whom will sport government-supplied guns.

At present, one would expect a referendum to support separation for the south, but how this could be achieved in reality is uncertain. One thing is clear however, that by allowing racist views and attitudes to spread into the very fabric of their society, the Sudanese have done themselves a great disservice. The rich cultural mix of the country makes it one of the most vibrant nations on earth.

APPENDIX 1

TIMELINE[26]

Middle Ages: Christian kingdoms along the Nile coexist with Muslim neighbours.
End of Middle Ages: Collapse of Christian kingdoms, rise of Funj Sultanate.
17th century: Emergence of Sultanate of Darfur.
1821: Turko-Egyptian conquest of Sudan 'unifies' small independent Sudanese states.
1885: Mahdist forces (of Mohamed Ahmed 'Al Mahdi') capture Khartoum after a long siege, including killing British General Charles Gordon.
1885: Al Mahdi dies, Khalifa Abdullahi takes over.
1892: Belgians capture Western Equatoria up to Mongalla. The Lado enclave becomes part of the Belgian Congo. French occupy parts of Bahr Al Ghazal and Upper Nile.
1896: Belgians agree to release Lado Enclave to British after Belgian King Leopold dies.
1898: Anglo-Egyptian forces led by General Kitchener overthrow the Mahdist state.
1899: Condominium agreement signed. French withdraw.
1900-1920s: 'Pacification' of the country, frequently characterised by violence.
1930: Southern Policy is introduced secretly to isolate the south culturally and linguistically from the north.
1930s-1940s: Nationalist sentiments develop rapidly in the north.
1947: Juba Conference organised by colonial government. Southern chiefs agree with northern nationalists to pursue a united Sudan. A crash program of integration follows.
1953: Self-rule is introduced. In the south, Sudanisation is seen as northernisation.
1955: In Equatoria, the Torit mutiny of southern soldiers refusing transfer to the north marks the beginning of the first civil war. Massacres of northern administrators, teachers and traders in the south.
1956: Independence on January 1. Ismail Al Azhari is first Prime Minister of national government formed of Unionist and Umma parties.
1958: Military takeover by General Abboud, political parties dissolved, state of emergency introduced.
1962: Sustained guerrilla war develops with Anyanya in the south.
1964: Abboud steps up military action in the south, thousands of southerners flee to neighbouring countries.
Oct 1964: General strike and popular uprising bring down government, transitional civilian government installed.
March 1965: Round Table Conference on the 'southern problem' attended by most parties from south and north.

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1965: Elections held, Umma's Mohamed Ahmed Mahjoub is new Prime Minister
1966-7: Umma's Sadiq Al Mahdi is Prime Minister for ten months.
1967: Sudan sides with Arab world, declares war on Israel, breaks ties with the United States, looks to the Soviet Union for support.
May 1969: Colonel Gaafar Mohamed Nimeiri takes power with leftist and communist support.
1970: Joseph Lagu becomes sole leader of Anyanya guerrillas.
July 1971: Nimieri survives brief communist coup, purges leftists from army and government.
1972: Relations improve with US and the West.
March 1972: Addis Ababa Agreement ends first civil war.
1973: Sudan's first permanent constitution proclaimed.
1973: Large scale Sudanese migration to Gulf states for work.
1978: Oil is discovered by Chevron at Bentiu in the south.
1979: With fall of Uganda's Idi Amin, many well qualified Equatorians return to south, shifting balance of power away from Dinka and Nuer.
May 1983: South divided into three regions and single regional government abolished, thus abrogating the Addis Ababa Agreement.
May 1983: Bor garrison mutinies, Colonel John Garang de Mabior later forms SPLM/A
September 1983: Nimeiri introduces *sharia* or September laws.
1984-5: Severe famine in west and east of Sudan following years without adequate rain.
April 1985: Strikes and demonstrations lead to overthrow of Nimieri by his chief-of-staff, General Abdel Rahman Sowar Al Dahab. Transitional Military Council installed.
1985: SPLA incursion into Nuba Mountains. 100 Baggara Arabs killed, government begins supplying arms to Baggara.
March 1986: Koka Dam Agreement in Ethiopia produces peace formula supported by Umma, rejected by Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and National Islamic Front (NIF).
April 1986: Elections – Sadiq Al Mahdi becomes Prime Minister of coalition Umma/DUP government, half of south unable to vote due to insecurity.
1987: Koka Dam Agreement abandoned by Al Mahdi, state of emergency declared, government campaigns begin to force displaced southerners out of Khartoum.
1987: SPLA starts a unit in the Nuba Mountains.
March 1987: Ed Dhein massacre – more than 1000 Dinka killed by Rizeigat Arabs, including many burnt alive in railway carriages. Reports of slavery of southerners.
1988: Famine in Southern Sudan, 250,000 die from hunger-related diseases. Government, militia and SPLA scorched earth and relief denial policies are primary cause of food shortages, compounded by drought, flood and pest infestations.
March 1989: Sadiq Al Mahdi begins peace talks with SPLM, ceasefire announced, UN Operation Lifeline Sudan established to bring famine relief to the South.
June 1989: Lt-Gen Hassan Omer Al Bashir takes power with covert NIF support. All political parties banned.
October 1989: SPLA/Khartoum ceasefire breaks down, National Democratic Alliance formed from north/south parties including Umma, DUP, Communists and later, SPLM.
December 1990: Bashir announces immediate implementation of sharia in north.
May 1991: 500,000 southern refugees fleeing to Sudan from Ethiopian camps after fall of Mengistu are bombed by Sudanese air force.

August 1991: Split in SPLA, Riek Machar and Lam Akol form breakaway SPLA-United.
September 1991: Malnutrition increases, especially in west, tens of thousands die.
October 1991: Government seals off Nuba Mountains, attempts to drive out Nuba and destroy SPLA in the area.
November 1991: 200,000 Dinka flee Bor after 5000 massacred by SPLA-United.
January 1992: Mass protests in Khartoum after 16 killed when displaced people's homes bulldozed by government.
February 1992: 300-member Transitional National Assembly appointed.
June 1992: Thousands of Nuba forcibly relocated to 'peace villages' by the government.
December 1992: UN General Assembly condemns Bashir government for gross violations of human rights.
1993: Peace talks collapse at Abuja, 100,000 southerners flee to Uganda, Ethiopia and Congo in August after government offensive against SPLA in Equatoria.
1993: US adds Sudan to lists of states sponsoring terrorists.
1993: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda and Kenya establish committee to resolve war under umbrella of Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development.
July 1994: 50,000 people expelled from Khartoum in two weeks of night raids.
August 1994: Beja Congress in Cairo reports government terrorising the east.
1996: US lists Sudan as terrorist sponsor again, bans financial transactions.
1996: Osama Bin Laden expelled from Sudan, at American urging.
1997: Riek Machar and Southern Sudan Independence Movement sign peace agreement with the Khartoum government.
May 1998: Construction begins of 1610 km oil pipeline linking Heglig oilfield in Kordofan with terminal on Red Sea coast.
August 1998: US missile attack on Khartoum's El Shifa chemical plant.
April 1999: Pipeline ready, refinery to process 2.5m tonnes of crude oil per year.
1999: Sudan and Uganda agree to stop supporting rebels on each other's territory – Lord's Resistance Army and SPLM.
1999: Bashir dissolves the National Assembly, declares state of emergency, following power struggle with parliamentary speaker Hassan Al Turabi.
2000: Governor of Khartoum decrees women barred from working in public places.
December 2000: Bashir re-elected for another five years in elections boycotted by main opposition parties.
February 2001: Turabi arrested a day after his Popular National Congress party signs a memorandum of understanding with SPLM.
March 2001: UN World Food Programme struggles to raise funds to feed three million people facing famine.
November 2001: US extends sanctions against Sudan for another year.
January 2002: Government and SPLM sign landmark renewable ceasefire agreement for Nuba Mountains, a key SPLM stronghold.
July 20, 2002: Government and SPLM sign Machakos Protocol. Government accepts rights of south to seek self determination after six year interim period. Southern rebels accept application of sharia in north.
July 27, 2002: Bashir and Garang meet for the first time in Kampala through mediation of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni.

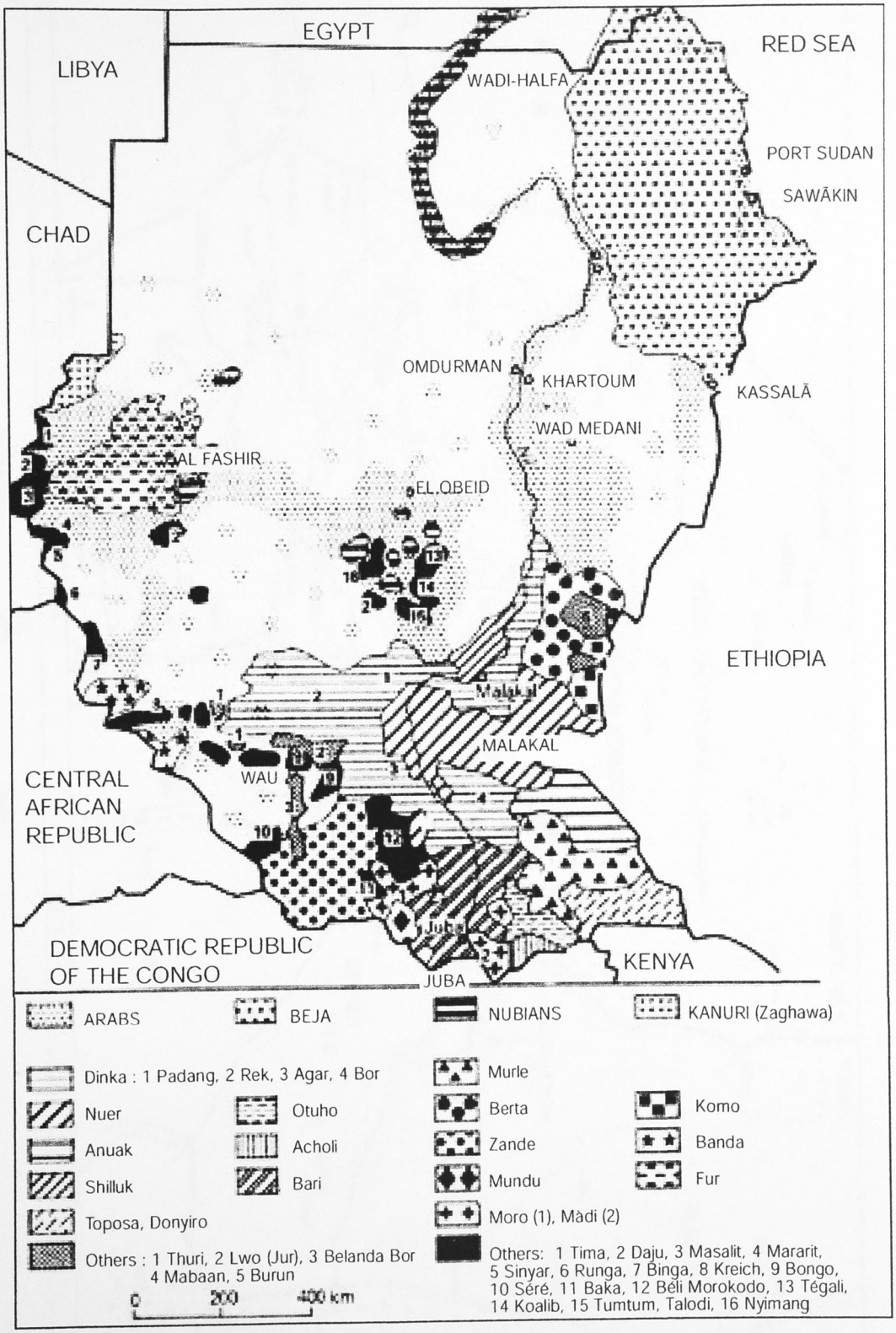
October 2002: Government and SPLM agree on a ceasefire during negotiations, but fighting continues.
February 2003: Darfur rebels rise against government, claiming region is neglected.
January 2004: Army moves to quell uprising in Darfur, thousands flee to Chad.
March 2004: International outrage over Darfur raids by *Janjaweed* militia.
May 2004: Government and SPLM sign major peace protocols in Naivasha, Kenya.
November 2004: UN Security Council holds meeting on Sudan in Nairobi.
January 9, 2005: Sudan government and SPLM sign final peace deal in Nairobi, Garang to replace Ali Osman Mohamed Taha as first vice president, fighting continues in Darfur.

APPENDIX 2

GEOGRAPHICAL MAP OF SUDAN

APPENDIX 3

ETHNOGRAPHICAL MAP OF SUDAN



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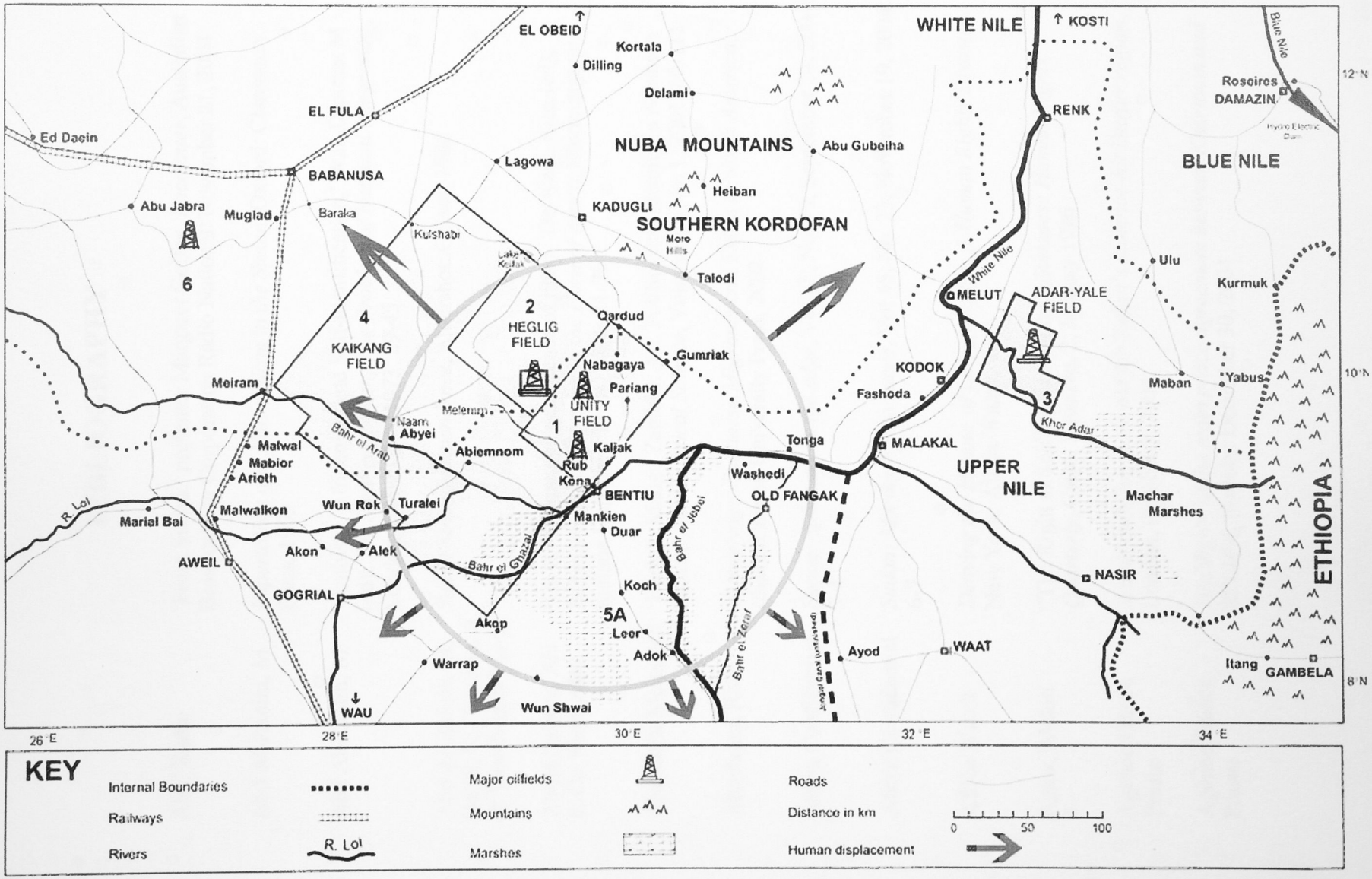
APPENDIX 4

SOUTH CENTRAL SUDAN – MAP OF ACTIVE OILFIELDS



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